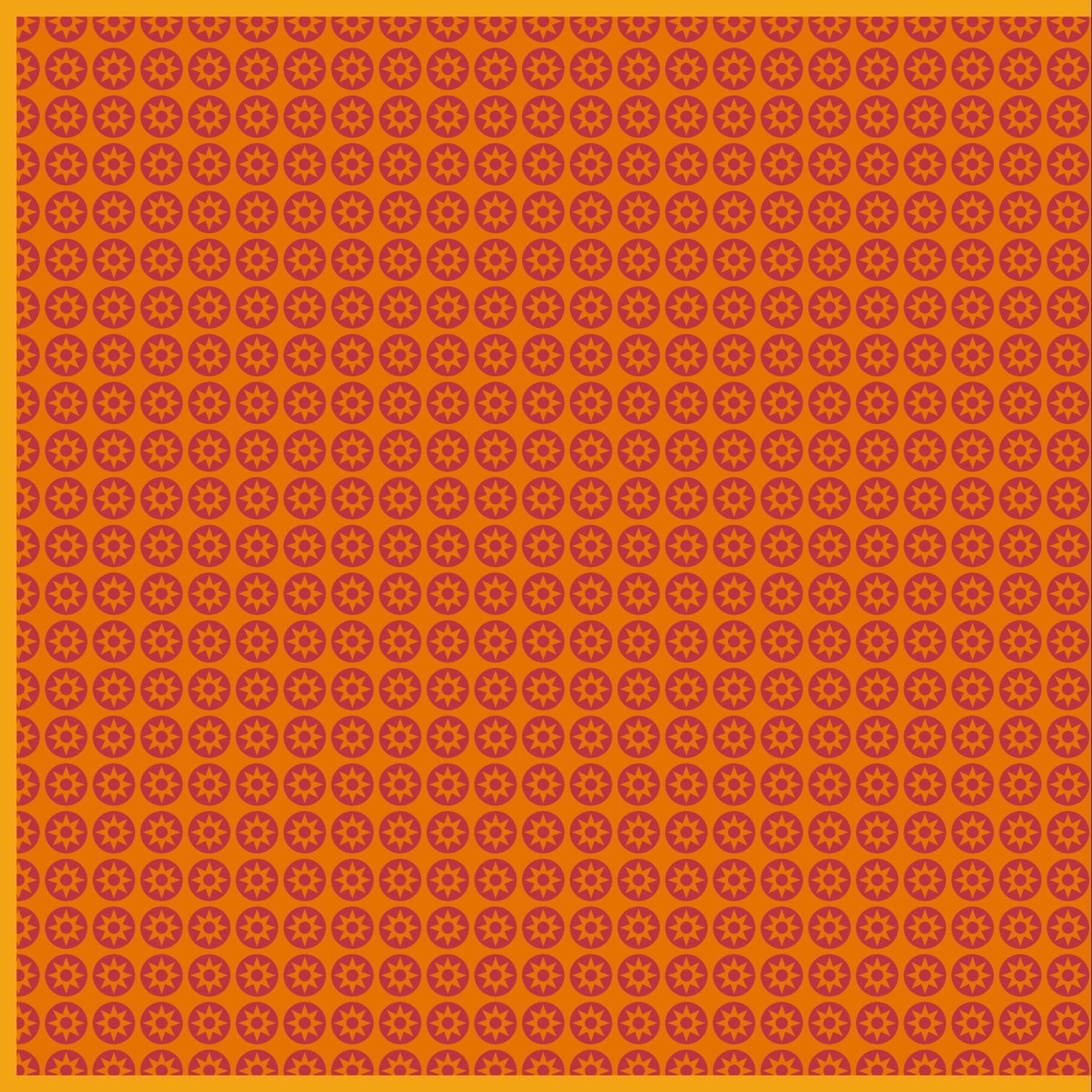


**INSPIRING
WOMEN**
in Commerce and
Contracting **2024**

A partnership of
WorldCC Foundation,
World Commerce & Contracting
and Icertis



INSPIRING WOMEN

in Commerce and
Contracting **2024**

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Contents

Welcome

4 Hi from Sally

Inspiring Women 2024

6 Greta Ambrutyte

8 Mary Bonsor

10 Mariana Campos

12 Elizabeth de Stadler

14 Sheila Dusseau

16 Ángela Flores

18 Paula Folkes-Dallaire

20 Leslie Harper

22 Elyssa Herd

24 Emily James

26 Melinda Johnson

28 Roma Khan

30 El Mendoza

32 Tricia Miller

34 Jessica Nguyen

36 Violet Okpere

38 Jody Rowe

40 Dora Ruiz Madrigal

42 Adriana Salazar Cota

44 Deborah-Anne Strydom

46 Elizabeth Vazquez

48 Emma Willingham

50 LeNaye Willis-Lloyd

Inspiring articles

54 Voices of change

56 Social mobility in action

58 Harnessing change

60 Unpacking who we are

62 A tale of two leaders

Thank you

65 The Inspiring Women 2024 committee

66 And finally

68 About WorldCC Foundation,
World Commerce & Contracting,
and Icertis

Hi from Sally

Welcome to the Inspiring Women 2024 book, a celebration of extraordinary women who continue to redefine what it means to lead, innovate, and create impact. This year, the WorldCC Foundation's Inspiring Women program has once again brought together an incredible community of trailblazers – women whose stories are as varied as they are inspiring.

In 2024, we explored themes that resonate deeply in our ever-evolving world: resilience, equity, innovation, and the power of authenticity. Through their journeys, these remarkable women remind us of the transformative impact of courage, empathy, and determination. They challenge barriers, elevate others, and show us how success is most meaningful when shared.

This collection highlights voices from across sectors and geographies, offering narratives of triumph over adversity, breakthroughs in fields long dominated by tradition, and bold steps toward a more inclusive and equitable future. As you turn these pages, I hope you'll feel the same spark of inspiration that fuels our mission at the WorldCC Foundation.

To those who have supported this program and celebrated the achievements of these women alongside us, thank you. To the women featured in this book – you are the inspiration lighting the path for us all.



"This collection highlights bold steps toward a more inclusive and equitable future"

Sally Guyer

President and Chief Executive Officer,
WorldCC Foundation

Global Chief Executive Officer,
World Commerce & Contracting



Greta Ambrutyte

Head of the Sustainable Public Procurement Competence Centre, Public Procurement Office, Lithuania

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Location: Lithuania

Q: Describe your professional background and story

In my role as Head of the Sustainable Public Procurement Competence Centre at the Public Procurement Office in Lithuania, my team of six experts and I advise policymakers and contracting authorities on all aspects of green, socially-responsible and innovative procurement. I also publish resources and run training sessions and other events to support vendors in transitioning to greener offerings and to promote green procurement practices that are good for people and the planet. In 2020, only 5% of Lithuania's public procurement spending by value used green criteria which give preference to environmentally friendly products and services. Over the past three years, this uptake has increased to 94% by value across Lithuanian contracting authorities. I believe that all these actions contribute not only to achieving national goals but also to building the capacity of contracting authorities to carry out sustainable procurement.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Leadership

Although existing global guidance recommends prioritizing categories for gradual uptake of green public procurement, Lithuania subjected all procurement categories to an obligation to buy green from the start – mandated by the political decision to buy 100% green by the end of 2023, affecting around 4,000 contracting authorities. In order to make it more convenient and simpler for contracting authorities, suppliers and all interested parties to find information about the environmental requirements set in green public procurements, and in which parts of the procurement documents they are set, I worked on the development of the new analytical monitoring tool 'Green public procurement according to the information filled in the procurement notices' – an interactive tool that provides information based on the data provided in the procurement notices of the contracting authorities about the environmental requirements in public procurements.

Using this tool, it is possible to analyze green public procurement data in various stratum according to the selected criteria, to search for practical examples of the application of environmental requirements in public procurement. The green procurement monitoring tool is available on the website of the Public Procurement Office (in Lithuanian only).

I also, organised the 'Buyers meet Suppliers for Energy Efficiency' Fair (hereinafter – The Green Fair) which was the first event in Lithuania dedicated to green procurement. The event attracted the attention of contracting authorities, entrepreneurs and others involved in the public procurement system. The event aimed to open sustainable solutions to the public procurement market, to demonstrate what and how to buy green so that everyone can contribute to Lithuania's environmental goals. The variety of goods and services presented by the suppliers (from organic food products to electric vehicles) had a significant impact on the success of The Green Fair.

Supporting diversity and inclusion

Lithuania spends around 13% of its GDP through public procurement. To ensure that public procurement contributes to addressing social issues, I have put together a team of different institutions responsible for different social areas. This work resulted in the publication of the *Socially Responsible Procurement Guidelines*, which provide examples of social criteria that could be applied in public procurement. Recommended social criteria mostly focus on implementation of the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination on other grounds, fair pay, the disabled, and the unemployed populations. This is an ongoing activity aimed at promoting socially responsible public procurement practices in Lithuania. It also plans to integrate new relevant social procurement

and inclusion metrics into the currently existing procurement performance *dashboard* (in Lithuanian only) of procurement, and institutionalize its use by all contracting authorities in Lithuania.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

As Head of the Sustainable Public Procurement Competence Centre, I mostly focus on leading the charge by encouraging the use of green criteria through training and resources, such as a helpdesk to assist contracting authorities, podcasts, newsletters, specific guidance for high-impact sectors and other vendor outreach events. I also use open procurement data to track the status of its 'green targets' through a user-friendly public *dashboard* (in Lithuanian only), and offer help, e.g. training, to contracting authorities if they are lagging behind ●

"I organised The Green Fair, the first event in Lithuania dedicated to green procurement"



Mary Bonsor

Founder of Flex Legal

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Location: UK

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Over seven years ago, Mary Bonsor, a qualified property litigator, launched Flex Legal on a mission to change the legal industry for the better. Initially, this was through ‘on demand’ interim legal recruitment, to help deserving law graduates who were hungry for legal work experience by pairing them with struggling legal teams with capacity issues. Later, Mary expanded Flex’s mission by founding the Flex Trainee scheme, a social mobility initiative designed to help aspiring solicitors from underrepresented backgrounds qualify in-house via the Solicitor Qualifying Exam (SQE).

To date, Flex Legal’s on-demand service has helped thousands of law graduates nationwide boost their careers by finding legal work experience. The Flex Trainee scheme, which launched in October 2021, is already helping 50 deserving socially mobile aspiring solicitors qualify with some of the UK’s biggest and best in-house legal teams.

As Founder of Flex Legal, Mary has played a pivotal role in helping the business to grow and develop into the incredible organisation it is today.

In October 2023, Mary made the decision to step down as CEO, whilst continuing to work for the business in her capacity of Founder. Mary felt wary that many founders remain CEOs as businesses mature, largely to satisfy their own egos. She felt very strongly that it was best to put the interests of the company and its people first, so instead decided to focus on her strengths in ‘incubating’ new business offerings and developing new client relationships.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Making a positive difference / supporting diversity and inclusion

Mary is incredibly passionate about making the legal industry more diverse, socially mobile, and human. Mary’s initial creation of the Flex On-Demand platform has been instrumental in providing opportunities for individuals from a wide range of social and academic backgrounds. Of the paralegals and lawyers that rely on the Flex platform, 59% are female, 52.8% Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME), and 79.4% state school educated, which marks a radical departure from the Solicitors Regulation Authority’s (SRA’s) diversity data for the wider legal industry.



This year, Flex Legal was proudly named as the only legal services organisation on the government’s Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Register – which underscores Mary’s commitment to fostering innovative and inclusive solutions within the legal sector. With over 50 trainees seamlessly integrated into in-house legal teams, Mary has not only facilitated important key skills development but has also contributed significantly to the growth and adaptability of the legal workforce.

Innovation and entrepreneurship

As testament to her entrepreneurial acumen, earlier this year Mary Bonsor and Flex Legal were recognised in the national press (the Independent’s E2E listings) as the fastest-growing female-founded company in the UK. This accolade stands as evidence of her resilience, strategic vision, and commitment to breaking barriers in the business world. Furthermore, being listed among the fastest-growing organisations in London in 2023, as per the Fast Growth 50 listing, further solidifies Mary’s role as a key player in driving economic development and fostering business growth in the heart of the UK.

Whilst Mary Bonsor’s professional achievements reflect her professional prowess, they also highlight her dedication to empowering others and reshaping the industry she knows and loves. Her work resonates not just within the legal realm but extends to the broader entrepreneurial landscape, making her a deserving candidate for recognition and celebration.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

In navigating the challenges of a particularly tough economic year, Flex Legal has been steadfast in its commitment to fostering long-term resilience. Recognising the importance of financial stability, Mary has strategically shifted the company’s focus towards ensuring profitability not just for immediate gains but with a keen eye on long-term success. In the face of a volatile market, resilience has become a cornerstone of Flex Legal’s strategy. Mary has implemented measures to enhance adaptability, embracing change as an opportunity rather than a threat. This proactive approach has allowed Flex Legal to thrive despite economic uncertainties.

Mary also plays a pivotal role in fostering resilience at Flex Legal by empowering female legal professionals to forge their path in the industry. This empowerment takes shape through initiatives such as the Flex Trainee scheme, providing a gateway for aspiring female lawyers. Additionally, Flex Legal’s interim lawyer business extends a valuable opportunity for female legal professionals to achieve an enhanced work / life balance, addressing a challenge that many women in the legal field grapple with. Complementing these efforts, Flex’s senior team, under Mary’s leadership, is predominantly comprised of talented female professionals. Mary actively encourages each member of this diverse team to break barriers and challenge stereotypes, creating an inclusive and empowering environment throughout the entire organisation ●



Mariana Campos

General Director, México Evalúa
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Location: Mexico

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I am a passionate Mexican policy expert, activist, mother, wife, and citizen, with a career focused on improving government efficiency to enhance people's lives. My studies in Economics (B.A., ITAM, Mexico) and Public Policy (M.Sc., Carnegie Mellon University, USA) were driven by a desire to reform Mexico's government to be more modern, accountable, and effective. I began my career at the Mexican Finance Ministry (SHCP) and Internal Revenue Service (SAT), but soon realized external pressure was needed for real reform. I moved to the IDEA Foundation, became a partner at GEA, and joined Mexico Evalúa in 2013.

At México Evalúa, I led the Public Expenditure and Accountability program, overseeing several significant projects aimed at improving public procurement transparency:

- MeTrOP – A metric for evaluating transparency in public works.
- Developed a model law for public contracts in collaboration with the Federal Economic Competition Commission.

- Worked with the OECD to enhance COMPRANET, Mexico's public procurement system.
- Investigated corruption, including the \$140 million Paso Express case, which won second place in a national contest.
- Led the Open Infrastructure Nuevo León project, replicated across 10+ governments, earning recognition as one of 11 OCP champions in 2022.

My commitment to advancing transparency, accountability, and effective governance in public spending led to my appointment as the General Director of México Evalúa in 2023. Despite many challenges – including political attacks from the President of Mexico, as we have become a trusted source of monitoring, evaluation and policy recommendations – we persist with rigorous data and objective studies. Our mission remains rooted in the principle that public funds must be utilized efficiently and effectively for the greater good.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

I picked two criteria. These have to do with two major events in my personal life:

Displaying resilience in the face of uncertainty

The first one is the loss of Inés, my newborn baby, due to medical malpractice. My doctor prescribed a medicine that affected my 38-week pregnancy in an irreversible manner. As a result, Inés suffered a massive drop of blood circulation. My doctor refused to take responsibility for the wrongful prescription and abandoned me and Inés in an emergency care room. The doctors there did not perform a timely C-section, and my baby died one hour after delivery. I took my case to the courts and won two trials. The doctors appealed, and I fought back. After nine years of legal fighting, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the doctors. Instead of surrendering, I chose to keep fighting, and I have become an advocacy leader against obstetric violence in Mexico. I have helped to build a network of women fighting for justice, called 'Con Ovarios' (With Ovaries).

Moral courage

The second is my victory over breast cancer. Three years ago, amid the chaos of the pandemic, I faced this terrifying diagnosis. I sought treatment in the U.S., and today, I'm proud to say I am cancer-free. This experience completely reshaped my life. It opened my eyes to the tragic realities many women in Mexico face. A broken public health system means long waits for treatment and even longer waits for hope. This led me to focus my work at México Evalúa on improving women's health. Now, I am a leader in the field of public health expenditure, contributing to the analysis and evaluation of public financing for the insured population within Mexico, strengthening chronic illness patient organizations; and as a result, I have made contributions to the design of the first cancer law in Mexico.

I have also been invited to be part of a group of experts who are preparing health policy recommendations. We will be building a proposal to solve medicine shortages in public hospitals and clinics, where I will use my contracting and public health knowledge. At the same time, I have been invited as a member of the advisory board of Medtronics.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

At México Evalúa, we prioritize research that highlights strengths and weaknesses in Mexico's public sector. By engaging local governments, we maintain relevance despite national political challenges. We also foster partnerships with academic institutions, civil society organizations, and international stakeholders, creating a collaborative network that enriches our research and strengthens policy recommendations.

México Evalúa promotes adaptability and continuous learning, embracing technology and investing in capacity-building. This approach ensures our team can navigate complex policy landscapes and stay at the forefront of public policy discussions, contributing to better governance in Mexico ●

"Public funds must be utilized efficiently and effectively for the greater good"



Elizabeth de Stadler

Founding Director of Novation Consulting
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Location: South Africa

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I often ask people “Why did you become a lawyer?” but only recently answered the question myself! I was born in Stellenbosch, South Africa as the daughter of two linguists. My father was one of the first academics in South Africa to specialize in information design and they both write dictionaries! So, I always loved reading and writing and wanted to become a journalist. When I was coming out of the closet in the late 90s one of the only other lesbians I knew about was Judge Satchwell. She was in the news a lot at the time, because she was suing the Department of Justice to obtain equal rights for her life-partner. Luckily journalism was a postgraduate degree, so I closed my eyes, conjured Kathy Satchwell, and picked law! I fell in love with contract law and never studied journalism.

After graduating I joined the biggest commercial law firm in South Africa at the time working in insurance litigation. I was fascinated by unfair contract terms and consumer protection. When the Consumer Protection Act was passed in 2008, it required consumer-facing contracts to be in plain language. All of a sudden

lawyers with a love for linguistics and visualization were in high demand. I left the firm to obtain a Master of Laws degree (LLM) in consumer law and behavioral economics and started my own practice.

I founded a legal consultancy called *Novation Consulting* in 2013. We apply legal design to contracts, policies, terms and conditions, legal advice and any legal or compliance documentation imaginable. We also founded *Hey Plain Jane*, a plain language agency. We specialize in legal, financial, health and educational information. The more technical the information, the happier we are. We practice something that we call #funlaw and one of my proudest moments was when we got a *levity pattern included in the WorldCC Foundation Contract Design Pattern Library* along with Novation’s Service Level Agreement (SLA)!

Sounds like a blast, doesn’t it? The reality was that by the time I left the firm in 2009 I was, unbeknown to me, suffering from major depression. I was extremely reluctant to admit it to myself, but my body forced me to my knees and by 2011 I had been in chronic pain for a year with no explanation. I was self-medicating with alarming amounts of alcohol and a series of disastrous online dating incidents.

BUT I was about to meet Peter (my psychiatrist) and Shelly (my therapist) who would spend the better part of a decade convincing me that the physical pain is a symptom of major depression. I now know that this is a very typical story for lawyers.

I am now on a mission to help lawyers do better, feel better and live better! My team and I recently started *Rehabilitated Lawyer* – to achieve this aim we organize talks, workshops, one-on-one mentoring and make lots noise and #funlaw on social media and at conferences. I am also working on a book about my ongoing recovery (provisionally) called *Less Wrong Than Before*. I firmly believe that living the legal design lifestyle and applying it to legal services is the key to our recovery as an industry.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

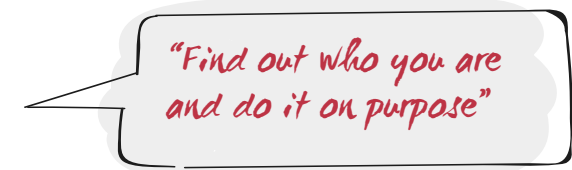
I am deeply uncomfortable selecting them, because I don’t do anything I do, alone. In South Africa we believe that a person is a person through other people (‘umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ or the philosophy of ubuntu). I have four co-founders who all deserve this award! Not to mention all the other people I have read and met along the way. Jorge Luis Borges once said that “I am not sure that I exist. I am all the writers that I have read, all the people that I have met, all the women that I have loved; all the cities I have visited”. But an award is an award, so here goes...

I believe that our three companies excel in:

- Inspiring and influencing others
- Innovating in how we apply legal design to all facets of law
- Showing bravery and moral courage by talking about mental health out in the open.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

When it comes to resilience, I subscribe to the wise words of the inimitable Dolly Parton: “Find out who you are and do it on purpose”. We believe that the secret to long-term resilience is unflinching authenticity. During a recent talk at the Legal Innovation & Tech Fest I translated this into the following call to action for leaders in law: “Embrace individuality, freedom of expression, diversity of thought and vibe, tattoos, dress codes for tomboys and saying fuck in presentations. Drop the clients, never each other. I call that #funprofessional!” ●





Sheila Dusseau

Global Head of Legal Operations, Ferring Pharmaceutical

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Location: Switzerland

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Sheila's career blends leadership, finance, manufacturing operations, and legal operations. She began in accounting, at a private firm, but her drive for being a part of the business led her to a small multinational company where she helped bring German and Swiss businesses to the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. From there, her interest in working with varied cultures, interests, and especially challenges, carried her to join Delta Air Lines where she managed global credit card sales, honing skills in sourcing, contracting, and team leadership. Later, at Georgia-Pacific, she expanded her finance and audit expertise, while gaining a passion for manufacturing operations. This passion led her to a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) role for a \$2 billion business, where she realized how much she missed being fully invested in the full range of operations of a business and its success.

When NCR offered her a leadership role requiring her diverse skills, Sheila began her journey into Legal Operations. At Ferring Pharmaceuticals, she built a

Legal Ops team from scratch, moving her family to Switzerland to lead a team that supports the Chief Legal Officer's (CLO's) Legal Services Vision, while building a love for data, innovation, and continuous improvement.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Leadership

One of my early successes in leadership came when I was promoted to Manager at Delta, overseeing two very different teams: young analysts fresh out of school, and experienced clerks nearing retirement. These two teams were unbelievably different, and this was evident in the lack of cohesiveness between the two, causing a variety of challenges. I set out to build trust and appreciation within the group by encouraging them to share both their unique experiences and common goals. I introduced key performance indicator (KPI) trackers to highlight each team's progress, celebrating milestones together. By the end of the year, the generational divide had melted away, and the team worked as one, solving problems with unconventional solutions. The team far exceeded their goals that year and just kept getting better.

Inspiring and influencing others

I love helping others unlock their potential and find new ways of approaching problems. A key moment for me was during a challenging contract management system (CMS) implementation. Six months after go-live, user dissatisfaction was at an all-time high, and support was overwhelmed. I still believed in the system's potential, so I convened a meeting with all key stakeholders – the CMS vendor teams, the digital assistant software vendor, and my team – and told them that it was time for all of us to step up, partner, and figure out how to turn around the situation. In just six weeks, we tackled every major issue, and within six months, user satisfaction dramatically improved. This unusual collaboration became a model for continuous improvement in our processes. Along the way, I even got comments from the vendors about how *we* inspired *them*. My favourite was being told by the digital adoption vendor Vice President (VP) that his team had become more creative and innovative – just by working with me and my team. I've loved working closely with these teams and seeing each grow alongside us!

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Resilience has been key in both my personal journey and within my teams. Our work often disrupts traditional ways of thinking, leading to uncertainty and resistance. I've helped my teams navigate this by instilling two non-negotiable principles: humility and integrity. Humility helps us admit when we don't have all the answers, and integrity ensures honesty in our interactions. I also teach my teams to "say the second thing that comes to mind", advice I received from a VP. This approach encourages thoughtful responses, fosters creativity, and allows us to overcome challenges without being reactive.

"Say the second thing that comes to mind"

To build long-term resilience, I focus on providing my team with learning and development opportunities, mentoring, and fostering a culture where everyone feels supported and valued. My team is encouraged to continuously improve, preparing them to face adversity with confidence. The feedback from my current team highlights this, as they feel both recognized for their achievements and given opportunities to grow through constructive feedback.

I also work closely with other teams across Ferring to embrace innovation, organizing workshops and brainstorming sessions to push boundaries. It's rewarding to see team members latch onto new ideas and drive progress across the organization. Through this approach, I've helped foster an environment where resilience is built not only through overcoming immediate challenges but through preparing for the future ●



Ángela Flores

Executive Director, ALAFARPE

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Location: Peru

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I am a health economist who graduated with a Master of Arts in International Development Economics at Yale University. I am studying for an Executive Masters in Health Economics and Management at the London School of Economics. My primary working experience has been in Peru in the public and private sectors, with health, public policy implementation, and infrastructure projects that have had an impact on the country and Latin America.

I've recently been leading the Pharmaceutical Association in building capacities within the health ecosystem. We are developing strategies and health campaigns to connect with authorities and engage in projects aimed at ensuring adequate access to innovative, high-quality medicines. Our focus is on patient-oriented strategies that promote sustainable health systems and transparent regulatory frameworks to enhance quality of life.

My second area of expertise is sustainable development in health (public and private sector), infrastructure, and disaster risk management, focusing on the water and sanitation sector incorporating robust economic and social analysis.

Before completing my masters degree, I graduated as an economist from Pacifico University in Peru. After some essential years working for the public sector as a cabinet advisor in the Ministry of Housing, Construction, and Sanitation and the Ministry of Health, I got enough experience that qualified me to work as a consultant for the Water and Sanitation Program at the World Bank.

Additionally, the Ministry of Housing was responsible for one government priority, the program 'Water for Everybody', oriented to expand the coverage of water and sanitation in urban and rural areas and the implementation of the program 'Saving Water', showing evidence of the relation between the water connection of a poor family and the increase of its purchase capacity. Lastly but not least important, the 'Water Volunteers' program designed to encourage university students to work in rural areas.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Leadership

I had the opportunity to be part of the staff of the Ministry of Health as a coordinator of development programs related to external debt with international cooperation. As part of this job, I researched the cost and benefits of introducing new vaccines into Peru, such as the Human Papiloma Virus (HPV), and Hepatitis B. Additionally, I had the honor to represent my country in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body organized by the World Health Organization in Mexico and Switzerland in May and October of 2008, bringing new proposals to the new legislation in Peru for tobacco control.

During the lockdown and as Executive Director in ALAFARPE, I started an alliance with WOMEN CEO to build a platform to prioritize health impact and health priorities for women in Peru. Now, we have a consolidated group of women experts in chronic diseases, cancer, and maternal mortality that have developed a solid strategy and activities motivating different perspectives from the private sector and academia.

Health policy implementation and innovation

I always looked for alternatives to improve access to medicines in Peru in the public and private sectors and reduce the out-of-pocket coverage for cancer, orphan, and rare diseases high-cost drugs. For that reason, I started to study and be curious about the implementation of risk-sharing agreements as a topic of enhancing financial sustainability for health systems and, at the same time, increasing access to innovations. This type of public policy is still scarce in Latin America.

"I always looked for ways to improve access to medicines in Peru"

As a result of this contribution to work and a widely open debate, a new cancer law and orphan drugs were discussed in Congress.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Concerning encouraging my organization, I believe that teamwork, motivation, and building a purpose value beyond the main interest of a particular industry are essential to obtaining a license to trade and long-term stakeholders. Another important measure is to frequently create and validate the strategy and include different perspectives that allow the organization to be in a better position to manage risk and capture opportunities.

Across all these business strategies, ethics are associated with the organization's principles and values. In this case, the purpose of the trade association is to prioritize innovative access to technologies, guarantee the quality, efficacy, and safety of all the products, and promote ethics and sustainability in the health ecosystem.

With that in mind, my day-to-day work takes me closer to my career principles of increasing the impact of development and public policy, improving living standards and economic growth, and sharing my academic knowledge and expertise with passion and technical depth ●



Paula Folkes-Dallaire

Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Defence and Marine Procurement, Canada

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Location: Canada

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Paula was appointed as Assistant Deputy Minister, Defence and Marine Procurement in April 2023. In this role, Paula supports Canada's military and coast guard operations by leading major air, land and marine procurements, and associated sustainment contracts.

A daughter of Jamaican immigrants, Paula was born in Toronto, Ontario. She grew up under the wise guidance of parents who told her to fight back with her mind when faced with racism. Paula did just that – she holds a B.A. in Political Science (summa cum laude), a Master of Public Administration from The University of Toledo in Ohio, and a Certificate in Cyber Security Risk Management from Harvard. She is a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, a qualified part-time instructor with the Canada School of Public Service and is a published author in the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*.

Paula has over 14 years of executive experience in a variety of leadership roles within Public Services and Procurement Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. From 2019 to 2023, Paula served as the Director General of Defence Procurement at the

Embassy of Canada in Washington, D.C. In that role, she was responsible for Canada's purchases under the United States Foreign Military Sales program, managing a caseload of over USD \$7 billion and led an international cooperation program. Under Paula's guidance, Canada is designing and implementing a new Cyber Security Certification program for federal contractors, to ensure resilient and secure supply chains. In 2023, Paula received a Commendation from the Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force as a civilian, for her exceptional professionalism and dedication in defence procurement.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Supporting diversity and inclusion

Paula uses her lived and professional experience to help others remain resilient in navigating the federal public service and leads within government to achieve sustainable increased diversity, equity and inclusion for all. As a steering committee member of the Black Executives Network (BEN), and Chair of its Data and Research Working Group, Paula is an effective influencer who fosters sustained change by advocating for disaggregated evidence-based data to challenge the status quo.

For example, Paula's leadership in policy development helped shape Canada's Budget 2023 announcement of USD \$45.9 million for a Mental Health Fund and dedicated career development programs for Black public servants. Paula and the BEN effectively engaged with the Auditor General of Canada to underscore the importance of undertaking a performance audit examining inclusion in the federal workplace for racialized employees, which was addressed in the *Auditor General's 2023 Fall Report 5*. Paula's work with the BEN helped spark a Task Force review of the Employment Equity Act, whose recommendations led to a fall 2023 government announcement to identify two new employment equity groups.

Inspiring and influencing others

Paula regularly provides speeches, keynote addresses, serves on panels, and engages in discussions on a variety of topics in defence and security, project management, and diversity, equity and inclusion. As a past mentor with the 1834 Fellowship of Operation Black Vote Canada, in 2022 Paula worked with her mentor and the policy development cohort to deliver a formal submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in their study of the foreign service and the future of diplomacy. The submission included a call to action to ensure that Canada's representation abroad also reflects the Canada we serve, and to value cultural competencies gained through lived experience.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

In 2021, Paula became a part-time instructor with the Canada School of Public Service and worked with the school to develop a short course for Deputy Ministers and their executive teams on DEI and unconscious bias.

She has delivered training for Infrastructure Canada, Canadian Human Rights Commission, and other organizations, to help raise awareness of key concepts such as unconscious bias, empathy, intersectionality, anti-Black racism, reconciliation, gender violence, and the difference between allyship, mentorship, and sponsorship. She is adept at putting into practical terms concepts like what it means to truly 'have a seat and a voice at the table', to equip federal racialized and marginalized leaders with the right tools to make a difference today and well into the future.

Paula provides advice in areas such as the design of the Public Service Employee Survey, which is administered annually to help better understand the state and health of the public service; she believes it is important not only to measure whether employees' work is valued but rather whether employees themselves feel valued as their authentic selves in the workplace. She has also championed the work of statisticians within government who developed models that more accurately project representation benchmarks for employment equity groups in federal departments, and advocates for ceasing the use of outdated Workforce Availability measures. During her time at the Embassy in Washington D.C., Paula was an inaugural member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee formed in fall 2019 and served as its Chair from 2022 to 2023. She drafted the Embassy's first diversity, equity and inclusion pledge, representing the Embassy's values in this space ●

"Paula equips federal racialized and marginalized leaders with the right tools to make a difference"



Leslie Harper

Senior Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank
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Location: USA

Q: Describe your professional background and story

With over two decades of service as an international development professional, my career has been defined by a passion for fostering positive change in Latin America and the Caribbean. Throughout this journey, I have emerged as a recognized expert in gender and diversity mainstreaming, making significant contributions to the region's development landscape.

Currently serving as the Gender and Diversity Coordinator for the Fiscal Management Division at Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), my role is pivotal in ensuring the integration of gender and diversity considerations into fiscal projects. Portfolio monitoring and mainstreaming are integral aspects of my responsibilities, allowing me to influence and shape initiatives that have a lasting impact on the communities we serve. A testament to my commitment and effectiveness, I was honored with the IDB's prestigious 2018 Gender Inclusion team award for excellence in advancing gender mainstreaming throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region.

One of the highlights of my career has been the support provided to multiple countries in the Latin American region in developing women in public procurement programs. This initiative not only showcased my expertise in gender inclusion but also demonstrated a commitment to empowering women and fostering diversity in public procurement processes.

Prior to the IDB, I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Chile, where I worked on a local government strengthening program in a rural municipality. This experience laid the foundation for my understanding of grassroots development and the intricate dynamics of local governance. It was during this time that I honed my skills in community engagement and learned the importance of sustainable, community-driven initiatives.

Over the years, I have led numerous investment and policy-based loans, utilizing my technical expertise, negotiation skills, and leadership skills to develop and implement successful programs. My track record reflects a consistent dedication to driving positive change, with a focus on inclusive and sustainable development strategies.

"My commitment to gender and diversity mainstreaming continues to be a driving force"

As I look back on my journey, I am proud of the impact I've had on the development landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean. My commitment to gender and diversity mainstreaming continues to be a driving force in my professional endeavors, as I strive to contribute meaningfully to the region's ongoing progress and transformation.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Inspiring and influencing others

In the area of inspiring and influencing others, I led an initiative at the IDB to promote women in public procurement, enabling the IDB to be one of the first international organizations to focus on the topic. The technical assistance programs I led supported the region and enabled Latin America to be at the forefront in the world in this area, with pioneers in Chile, Dominican Republic, City of Buenos Aires in Argentina and Honduras. I did this through my enthusiasm for the topic, dedication, and a strong emphasis on teamwork including people from different areas of the bank as well as in the partner governments. I articulated a compelling and shared goal and helped team members understand the broader impact of their contributions. Ultimately, by fostering a collaborative and supportive atmosphere, I was able to develop a successful program.

Making a positive difference

In terms of making a positive difference, I was recently elected to serve on the IDB's staff Association Board of Directors, where I have been working on initiatives that promote a fair, inclusive and transparent work environment, particularly with regards to gender equality and inclusiveness for people of all backgrounds.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Yes, supporting long-term resilience has played a critical role in my success in developing effective teams. I have achieved this through promoting continuous learning and by promoting a positive work environment that values open communication, collaboration, and mutual support and by recognizing and rewarding resilience and perseverance in the face of challenges. In addition, I regularly seek feedback from people on my team to understand their concerns and needs, and actively involve them in decision-making processes, making them feel more invested in the organization's resilience. I also work hard to establish a culture of continuous improvement, encouraging team members to learn from experiences and adapt processes accordingly. Finally, I always ask for feedback to identify areas for improvement ●



Elyssa Herd

Sourcing Specialist, NSW Treasury
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Location: Australia

Q: Describe your professional background and story

My professional path has wound through diverse fields from early childhood education to property administration, service provision, and finance, finally landing on my passion for procurement in 2015. Alongside my career, I have the challenging role of being a devoted mother to two young children.

The shift into procurement and ethical sourcing signifies a pivotal moment in my career. It wasn't just a career transition; it aligned my passions with my professional pursuits. For me, procurement showcases a commitment to driving positive change beyond the bottom line. This is an exciting time for women in the industry. The women's economic reform happening at a national level allows us to prove our worth and forge our path as empathetic leaders with win-win negotiating styles and an ability to form strong relationships with stakeholders and suppliers alike.

As a parent, I bring a unique perspective to my work. The empathy, patience, and multitasking skills cultivated through parenthood intertwine seamlessly with the strategic thinking and ethical considerations integral to procurement and sourcing. My dedication to ethical practices isn't just a professional goal; it's a personal one, driven by a desire to create a better world for my children, as I take the lead in things like modern slavery risk assessment, disability inclusion and the practical application of social procurement policies within NSW Government.

My current role of sourcing specialist with NSW Treasury is varied and interesting. The recent change in government is enacting change across the sector – which is both exciting and challenging. I hope to continue embedding my personal values into business practices so I can best serve the citizens of NSW and beyond.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Supporting diversity and inclusion

I have always been a passionate advocate for creating an inclusive workplace that fosters belonging. Most recently, I was appointed the co-lead for NSW Treasury's Disability, Employment and Inclusion stream. This role has been incredibly rewarding, with contributions like collaborating on the Treasury's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). I spearheaded initiatives such as STEPtember, raising nearly \$7,000 for people with Cerebral Palsy, and introduced the sunflower lanyard for individuals with hidden disabilities. Additionally, my involvement in cross-cluster delivery groups has been pivotal. From implementing recommendations from the Ernst & Young report in 2022 to navigating actions post the royal commission, I've played an instrumental role in steering our organisation towards greater inclusivity and belonging.

Raising the reputation of contracting within NSW Government

After attending the 'Women in Procurement' conference in March, I have been tirelessly advocating for change within my sector. Collaborating with WorldCC, internal legal teams, and various stakeholders, I've advocated relentlessly for contract simplification. By highlighting the advantages of streamlined contracts and their design, I've aimed to reshape perceptions and practices. Driving change in this sector encounters its fair share of obstacles, yet I persist with incremental steps. I firmly believe that the cumulative impact of these efforts will surpass the initial challenges. Embracing small steps in this journey is crucial, as I believe eventual benefits – increased efficiency, clearer terms, and improved outcomes – will significantly elevate the reputation and effectiveness of contracting within NSW Government.

"Small, consistent strides pave the way for substantial and lasting impacts"

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

I am committed to fostering long-term resilience within NSW Government and NSW Treasury by promoting innovation, adaptability, and strategic planning. In my day-to-day role, I focus on effective governance and delivering innovative solutions that adhere to the existing legislative and policy framework. My goal is to ultimately streamline processes and create a more responsive ecosystem.

My commitment to navigating challenges with persistence and patience reflects a long-term vision. Despite encountering barriers, my persistence speaks volumes about my belief in the transformative power of change. My mindset is that small, consistent strides pave the way for substantial and lasting impacts. By engaging in these transformative endeavours, I am fortifying the government's ability to adapt, learn, and respond effectively to challenges, ensuring not just short-term success but also long-term resilience ●



Emily James

Head of Talent Procurement, BP

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Location: UK

Q: Describe your professional background and story

My background is in building and running procurement and operational teams focused on Talent Acquisition and Management of the External Workforce. Currently, I lead the Global Talent Procurement team at BP, where we focus on creating innovative supply solutions for our labour categories. As part of BP's Procurement leadership team, I ensure that our market spend is competitive, efficiently sourced, and inclusive of diverse suppliers.

My professional story began with a Masters in International Purchasing from Bordeaux Business School, leading to my first role in Indirect Procurement at an investment bank in London. Shortly afterwards, the bank insourced the management of Contingent Workers in EMEA, and I found my first job as a team lead responsible for the recruitment and management of thousands of external workers!

Having lived through the banking crisis of 2008, it was time for a change, and I joined BP (for the first time) to step into my first global role. Responsible for procurement of HR Products and Services, I led several key outsourcing deals involving multiple sites before joining HR for a brief period as a supplier relationship manager. Always driven towards building new solutions, I joined another investment bank in 2014 to take on the strategic direction and operational management of a centralized external workforce function covering the EMEA and LATAM regions, with 80,000 resources across 64 countries!

Having decided to go freelancing in 2019 and experience life on the other side, I found myself back at BP at a hugely exciting time. Our new strategy to transition to an integrated energy company had been announced, the company was reinventing itself and I was keen to play a role in what I consider to be one of the greatest challenges the world is currently facing. I therefore took on the role of Head of Talent Procurement and am proud to be a small part of the change that we are making.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Inspiring and influencing others

As BP transforms to an integrated energy company, new skills are required to navigate increasingly complex markets. We have a considerable reliance on external workers, but a lack of visibility and management created issues around overspend, employment misclassification, and lack of alignment with the overall talent strategy. I identified a solution – Total Resource Management (TRM) – an integrated talent strategy that incorporates both employees and non-employees. Bringing together those who would benefit most from the programme, I was able to gain sponsorship and funding from the Heads of Finance, HR, Digital and Businesses. This was challenging given the very different business agendas, competing priorities of an organization in transition and the lack of peer case studies given that we are one of the first. With the kick-off in 2022, I am now responsible for leading our TRM programme whose delivery has identified significant cost reduction to date.

Innovation and entrepreneurship

The first phase of TRM spanned \$1 billion in spend, more than 7,000 engagements, and over 50 supply partners. It aimed to reduce costs, improve the buying experience, and provide data visibility that didn't exist before. I designed a model featuring 'Talent Triage', which helps identify the best workforce channel, coupled with Fieldglass technology for deployment, and an onboarding team for data visibility. This implementation has led to cost reductions through better pricing, demand management, and improved buyer experiences. It also supported BP's sustainability goals by incorporating efficiency into our talent acquisition process.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Through founding and leading Total Resource Management, I am building resilience for BP in the following ways:

- **Enhanced Workforce Planning:** TRM allows for better workforce planning by providing a complete view of existing skills, enabling us to strategically deploy resources and adapt to changing business needs.
- **External Workforce Development:** By gaining full transparency into our external workers' skillsets, we can now design development programs to upskill and reskill both permanent and non-permanent employees, essential for accelerating BP's energy transition.
- **Performance and Productivity Management:** TRM enables BP to effectively manage and engage our non-employee workforce, essential for staying agile in a changing economic landscape.
- **Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** TRM supports BP's sustainability framework by enabling more inclusive hiring within our external workforce, fostering diversity within our talent supply chain, and providing real-time data to monitor progress ●

"I founded and lead a talent strategy which improves the buying experience and provides data visibility"



Melinda Johnson

Director General and Chief Operating Officer, OFGEM

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Location: UK

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Melinda's professional journey began in a Yorkshire mining village, where she left school without formal qualifications. Inspired by strong women in her life, she *did* pursue her education and made a commitment to life-long learning. Joining the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) sparked Melinda's 35-year commercial career.

Throughout her career, Melinda championed three core values: positivity, generosity, and reliability. Positivity became her resilience in adversity, a beacon guiding her through setbacks and inspiring others by sharing the lessons learned. Her generosity extended beyond measure, offering opportunities, expertise, and experiences, fostering positive connections even with the most challenging stakeholders. Melinda's track record boasts initiatives beyond her role, showcasing unwavering reliability, even amidst the most trying circumstances.

Life-long learning saw Melinda achieving a Distinction in her Durham University MBA at age 30. She also became one of the first female CIPS fellows and the first female commercial director in government.

She continued to role model life-long learning relentlessly throughout her career. More recently, she completed the Senior Civil Service High Potential Development Scheme, leading to her becoming the first government commercial director to be promoted to a Chief Operating Officer role as a Director General. Over the years, her accomplishments earned her recognition on the first CIPS Procurement Power List and later as a 'Woman of Influence' by Baroness Verma of Leicester in the House of Lords.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Leadership

Melinda, the trailblazing first female commercial director in government, ignited a movement for change. Her journey wasn't just about breaking barriers; it was about paving the way for others. She didn't stop at shattering the glass ceiling; she ensured more women followed suit. Her passion for empowering women resonated through her actions. Melinda didn't just encourage; she actively supported, mentored, and championed talented women at every level. Her relentless dedication fuelled a transformation, turning the once male-dominated sphere into a landscape where women thrived and reached the very top of the commercial profession.

Supporting diversity and inclusion, and inspiring and influencing others

Beyond her role, Melinda became a beacon for inclusivity. She didn't merely advocate; she orchestrated change. Following years of championing women, she creating the Gender Network within the Government Commercial Function, she bridged gaps, educating and involving men in understanding women's issues. Their efforts weren't just talk; they brought tangible results. From advocating for menstrual health to shedding light on the menopause journey, Melinda's initiatives fostered an environment of acceptance and support. Her impact extended far beyond her immediate sphere. Melinda's commitment to women's causes transcended boundaries. Active in various women's networks, she stood as a voice for social mobility, challenging biases and addressing barriers. Her mantra echoed loud and clear: "It's not where you come from, but where you're going that matters!"

Melinda's legacy isn't just about statistics or numbers; it's about the tangible, lasting change she instigated. Her relentless advocacy and unwavering support have created a landscape where talent knows no gender, where inclusivity isn't a buzzword but a way of life.

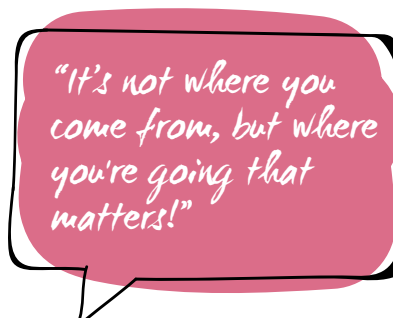
Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Melinda has long advocated for enabling people to reach their potential outside of London, recognizing the limitations of a London-centric focus, especially for social mobility. Her work at the Department for Transport saw her transform a struggling outpost in Hastings into a thriving hub of commercial and digital expertise. In 2017, she established the Government Commercial Function Northern Hub, spreading leadership across

northern cities like Leeds, Manchester, and Newcastle, significantly boosting regional talent and enabling people in the north to reach their aspirations and fulfil their potential.

Her role as the one of the inaugural Heads of Place in the Midlands further exemplified her commitment. Working closely with universities and local leaders, she fostered innovative networks and conferences, driving social mobility and career opportunities. Her efforts culminated in the establishment of the Cabinet Office's second headquarters in Glasgow, where she led outreach programs with lower socio-economic schools and partners like Barnardo's, becoming one of the first Director Generals in Scotland at Ofgem with a staff of over 750.

At the Department of Health and Social Care, Melinda's advocacy for 'Smart Working' principles laid the foundation for a swift response to the pandemic, evolving into the now-standard Hybrid Working model. Her ambition for the Health Commercial Function resulted in the prestigious CIPS gold standard global accreditation and the adoption of the award-winning 'Atamis' e-commerce platform across the NHS, further embedding resilience across the entire health system. Melinda was nominated by her colleagues at the Department of Health and Social Care in Leeds, and is now named on the Leeds 'Ribbons Sculpture' as one of 383 inspiring women of Leeds ●





Roma Khan

Chief Executive Officer and Founder of CrushContracts Inc

www.linkedin.com/in/contractsqueen

Location: USA

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I'm Roma Khan, CEO and Founder of CrushContracts, a company dedicated to contract innovation and reduction. My mission is to humanize contracts, creating stronger relationships between legal departments, stakeholders, and counterparties. I'm a bootstrapping legal tech founder, leading a women-owned and women-managed team of contract lovers and innovators.

My journey began when I immigrated to the USA at 16, after living in India and Saudi Arabia. Growing up, I was expected to follow traditional paths like becoming a doctor, wife, and mother but I chose law, advocating for myself and others. Initially, I aspired to be a prosecutor, but during law school I discovered a passion for business, sales, and contracts. I graduated law school during the recession with no prospect at working as a prosecutor so, I took a contracts manager job to learn something new and I fell in love with the world of business transactions, commercial contracts, and corporate strategy, oh my!

Early in my career, I realized the importance of humanizing contracts, treating counterparties as people rather than faceless entities. This approach helped me de-escalate negotiations, protect interests beyond corporate profits, and accelerate deal-making.

My love for technology led me to specialize in Software as a Service (SaaS) contracts, and I eventually developed Zoey, a contract lifecycle management (CLM) software for small businesses to manage their contracts efficiently from the start. In 2017, I launched CrushContracts to fund Zoey and provide remote, on-demand contract solutions. We offer flexible work for parents, especially moms, who face challenges re-entering the legal industry. Though initially met with resistance, my vision for remote contract solutions took off after I gained in-house experience as General Counsel for a mid-market logistics company.

In 2021, we launched Zoey amidst the pandemic and my in vitro fertilization (IVF) journey. Time was running out and I had to do IVF, CrushContracts, Zoey and personal life during a pandemic, all at the same time.

It was a very challenging period, but I would not trade it for anything. I learned about my body, and its abilities. Zoey became my first baby. I didn't get everything I worked for, but I am very grateful for everything I ended up with.

In 2023, CrushContracts officially expanded into CLM implementation and contract data management. I love my contract and technology-loving team, and together we are helping companies process and manage their contracts better than ever. Our focus is normalizing CLM and contract tech across industries, with AI-powered solutions drastically reducing contract repository management costs. We prioritize client happiness and contract efficiency over billable hours – our winning formula.

Outside of contracts, I enjoy baking, watching murder mysteries, and spending time with my stepchildren and their wonderful father, my biggest supporter.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

I started IVF treatments in 2021. In 2022, I formed a Facebook group providing support and education to my fertility clinic's fellow patients. We, the patients, needed a safe space to ask questions, vent, and share inspiration. One of the issues I found with the clinic and with the IVF industry is an absolute waiver of claims. In 2022, the clinic was acquired by a national company, and they updated their contracts. They asked us to re-sign the consent forms, and I used that opportunity to add a carve out 'except for willful misconduct and gross negligence'. My tactic of humanizing the contract worked, and they agreed to the change, leading to a major win for patients in an industry notorious for one-sided agreements. I believe we can use contracts to benefit the world, and not just win business for our clients and employers.

"I believe we can use contracts to benefit the world, not just win business for our clients and employers"

I am a fierce advocate for women's rights and equality in the workplace and strive to make law accessible to all. I speak openly about my IVF experiences on LinkedIn and encourage women to speak to me about their questions and concerns about egg freezing. I call out General Counsels and other corporate leaders to provide adequate health benefits, and childcare coverage in their companies so women have options instead of sacrifices in their careers.

Lastly, I mentor lawyers and contracts professionals in self-empowerment, contracting and legal technology. It is my privilege to provide them with the information I have gathered over the years and lead them to other experts and resources like Nada Alnajafi, and World Commerce & Contracting to improve their skills. During my early years of contracting, I promised myself that I would help the women behind me with everything I have learned so they can do the same for others. I built a staircase, not a ladder, so many can move up together and there is no risk of losing a rung or kicking the ladder ●



El Mendoza

Senior Compliance Manager, Cypress Creek Renewables

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Location: Philippines

Q: Describe your professional background and story

My journey starts with humble beginnings. At 16, I left my hometown and moved to Manila in search of opportunities. Since I was underage, I started working as a house helper and babysitter. Through hard work and perseverance, I earned my college degree in five years, with the support of my older sister. During and after college, I worked as a urine collector for a drug testing company. Eventually, I was hired as a Legal Secretary at a law firm, where I honed my skills in the legal field. After two years, I transitioned to a Paralegal role at AES Corporation, a power generation company, which allowed me to return to school for a Paralegal program accreditation. I worked during the day and attended classes during evenings and weekends. Talk about U-turns; I pivoted in my career and pursued a job related to my degree three years later. After three years, I made another significant career change and moved to a water utility company as an Office Supervisor.

In 2019, I embarked on a life-changing journey and moved to the USA. With all the uncertainties, leaving everything behind was the biggest risk I've ever taken. I was unemployed for the first nine months after arriving in California. But things changed when a leader I had worked with in the Philippines introduced me to EDF Renewables. That connection led to my first job in the USA as a temporary Administrative Assistant. After three months, I was converted to a full-time employee. With my Paralegal background, I was given the opportunity to become a Contracts Administrator and was promoted to Contracts Manager a year later. Another door opened within EDF, and I took on the role of Compliance Manager. As I continued to learn and open myself to new heights and challenges, I took a new role outside EDF after four years. In January 2024, I started work as a Senior Compliance Manager at Cypress Creek Renewables.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Written by Marty Crotty, previous President of AES

I met El in 2014 when I was the President of the Asia Region for the AES Corporation based in Manila, Philippines. El was the Ethics and Compliance Paralegal, and she always brought energy, positivity, and a contagious attitude that uplifted the entire team. She had a very positive and uplifting influence on the other members of the team. She also had an impressive work ethic with a drive for personal improvement. As an example, while she was working full time, she was also going to school in the evenings to get her Paralegal accreditation. Among her accomplishments at AES were creating and implementing a records filing and document management system for the legal team and managing ethics and compliance training for plant and head office employees. She came up with the caption "Safety is the engine, and WE are the key that starts it".

Of all the accomplishments that El has had, the most impressive one was in May of 2023 where she facilitated a 'Pay It Forward for the Kids' event for the children in her hometown in the Philippines. She led an effort to garner support from friends, family, and co-workers to make donations for the cause. The team she led was able to feed 560 people, provide school supplies, hygiene kits, toys, books, clothes, water bottles, etc. The pictures I've seen from this event are spectacular.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Resilience begins with fostering empathy and understanding toward others, creating a safe and supportive environment for all. By practicing patience and acceptance, we can build stronger, more positive relationships. I always remind people that I don't give

to get something in return; I give to inspire others to do the same. Giving back is my way of expressing gratitude and sharing my blessings, especially with children. That's why I founded 'Pay It Forward for the Kids' in the Philippines, an initiative dedicated to supporting and inspiring children to pursue education, believe in their dreams, and invest in their futures. My mission is to help break the cycle of poverty in our society, step by step. Giving reminds us of our privilege, fostering a sense of humility and generosity, and spreading kindness has the power to create a ripple effect of positivity. For me, advocating for oneself is equally important. It's about recognizing our worth, standing up for our needs, and living authentically. When we do this, we're better equipped to support and advocate for others. I believe that success is never out of reach when we help each other along the way ●

"Spreading kindness has the power to create a ripple effect of positivity"



Tricia Miller

Chief Procurement Officer, Accenture

www.linkedin.com/in/tricia-a-miller

Location: USA

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Throughout my 23-year tenure at Accenture, my journey has been a testament to change, evolution and impactful contributions within the organization. I began as a business analyst within, and later transitioned into Procurement, focusing on technology and the digitization of procurement processes. In leading this procurement transformation, I understood that digital change is more than just deploying tools – it’s about fostering ongoing process efficiency. This shift allowed us to free resources and focus on more strategic offerings, such as sustainability, supplier inclusion and diversity, external talent strategy, and 360 partnerships. This transformative journey has been rooted in my belief that procurement’s essence lies not only in buying goods and services but in generating invaluable intelligence to empower Accenture’s growth. This paradigm shift emphasizes our role as strategic partners, facilitating informed business decisions.

As I took on greater responsibilities, I managed global teams across payables, procurement operations, and delivery centres, while also handling category governance and the procurement aspects of Ventures & Acquisitions for the world’s most acquisitive company.

Throughout, I consistently approached these areas with a mindset of improvement – always asking, “What could we do better?” It is with great pride that since the start of 2023 I now serve as the interim Chief Procurement Officer (CPO), overseeing all of Accenture’s procurement activities with a focus on how we encourage our business stakeholders to buy in a profitable and responsible way.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Innovation and entrepreneurship

Throughout my career, I’ve championed innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in driving technological advancements within Accenture’s procurement landscape. Spearheading the digitization of procurement processes not only created operational efficiency but also generated intelligence that enabled procurement to evolve into a value-add function. Adopting a data-driven approach helped our people take a vested interest in our procurement transformation and helped extend a commitment to nurturing a living digital ecosystem that ensures continual improvement and value extraction from our technological investments. Recognizing the symbiotic relationship between business and IT teams,

I’ve fostered a collaborative environment, emphasizing collective responsibility in deploying and enhancing technology solutions that are hyper-focused on a business outcome not just the technology enablement. Understanding that successful adoption hinges on capacity-building, I’ve advocated for empowering our teams to have capacity to both contribute to, and seamlessly embrace, change.

Supporting diversity and inclusion

I’ve also always understood the importance of advancing diversity and inclusion initiatives, particularly within Accenture’s Supplier Inclusion & Sustainability program. I’ve actively contributed to our commitment to diversity by integrating inclusive practices within our third-party supplier ecosystem. Collaborating closely with organizations championing diversity, we’ve identified and nurtured relationships with diverse suppliers, elevating them through our Diverse Supplier Development Program supporting their holistic development. My role extends beyond mere identification of diversity; it encompasses leveraging these insights to drive responsible buying practices and influencing our procurement processes. Despite limited budgetary control, I’ve collaborated with budget owners and buyers, advocating for aligning procurement decisions with Accenture’s broader diversity agenda. I’m proud to have now been selected to join the Board of the National Minority Supplier Development Council.

“I’ve empowered our teams to have the capacity to both contribute to, and embrace, change”

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

I’m committed to embedding a culture of adaptability and resilience within Accenture’s procurement function, aligning every procurement initiative with a value-centric narrative relevant to our business. It’s not merely about executing tasks but comprehending the broader implications, enabling our teams to articulate the ‘so what’ tailored to diverse audiences across Accenture.

A fundamental shift has been steering our focus towards our operating model, emphasizing collective cohesion across processes rather than isolated team outcomes. There is no better example of this than Procurement’s partnership with Legal to drive out a contract lifecycle management (CLM) solution that improves the contracting process for all involved. Strategically, we’ve redefined roles, empowering process owners and stewards with increased responsibilities and ownership. This transition deliberately removes transactional work, empowering our teams to concentrate on driving impactful outcomes that resonate with Accenture’s objectives. Moreover, a data-driven continuous improvement ethos has been instilled, and we have cultivated a mindset where data guides decisions, enabling us to adapt and refine strategies continually. By harnessing the power of data, we’ve propelled a culture of innovation and evolution, constantly fine-tuning our approach for sustained resilience.

At the core of this lies the ability to communicate and adapt our value story to varied stakeholders, ensuring that every facet of our resilience-building efforts resonates with the broader business context. This strategic alignment empowers our teams to not only understand the ‘why’ but to actively participate and take ownership in shaping Accenture’s resilient future ●



Jessica Nguyen

Chief Legal Officer, Lexion
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Location: USA

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Who am I? I'm Jessica Nguyen, the Chief Legal Officer of Lexion, an AI-powered end-to-end intake and contract lifecycle management (CLM) system founded at the Allen Institute for AI. My journey has been shaped by humble beginnings; I grew up in a low-income household with immigrant parents who struggled to speak English and adapt to life in America. Relying solely on scholarships and hard work, I put myself through college and law school. My roots have instilled in me a strong commitment to advocating for women, people of color, the Asian American community, and first-generation Americans. I believe in breaking barriers and providing opportunities for those who face adversity, just as I did.

What truly sets me apart is my commitment to education and mentorship. I've dedicated myself to elevating my profession by educating not only my peers but also CEOs, CFOs, COOs, and board members on the strategic value of Legal as a partner, not just a cost center. Through webinars, public engagements, and one-on-one interactions, I've provided invaluable career and practice advice to thousands of legal professionals.

I've had the privilege of being recognized as an influential leader, receiving prestigious awards and being invited to be the keynote speaker for the 2023 Asian Bar Association of Washington gala. My journey is one of resilience, determination, and a passion for sharing. Being selected for the Inspiring Women Program is a tremendous honor, enabling me to further champion the causes I hold dear and inspire future generations of women and underrepresented individuals in the legal industry.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Inspiring and influencing others

Throughout my legal career, I have dedicated myself to giving – giving candid advice, referrals, and opportunities – while always showing up authentically. This has led to inspiring and influencing others, especially those who share my journey, who look like me, or sound like me, to feel like they are represented, belong, and they're deserving of success too.

As an advocate for women, people of color, and underrepresented communities, I've mentored aspiring professionals, offering guidance, and support to help them overcome challenges and excel in their careers.

I frequently receive LinkedIn messages from women and people of color I do not know telling me that something I said at a conference or webinar or posted on LinkedIn inspired them to ask for a promotion in pay or title. Now that's incredibly rewarding.

In addition, through speaking engagements and thought leadership, I have empowered thousands of legal professionals with practical career advice, fostering a spirit of courage and continuous growth. Often the biggest barrier blocking growth and success is yourself.

Innovation and entrepreneurship

As a growth-centric General Counsel at Lexion, I have been a driving force behind innovation and entrepreneurship in the legal technology sector. This drive was recognized this year by the Washington State Bar Association where I was the recipient of the Apex Award for Legal Innovation. [You can watch a video clip here about the award here.](#)

I have actively shaped Lexion's product direction and strategy. There are many tools like Lexion (over 200 the last time I looked), but we have intensely focused on ease of implementation and use to differentiate in a way that matters to clients. My journey as an advocate for diversity, and an influential thought leader showcases my dedication to inspiring, influencing, and driving innovation within the legal profession and beyond.

"I inspire and influence others, to feel like they are represented, belong, and are deserving of success"

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

In my role at Lexion, I have championed resilience by fostering a culture that embraces innovation, resilience, and adaptability. I joined Lexion at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world shut down and Lexion faced uncertainty. The path to growth looked insurmountable at that time. However, our unwavering commitment to innovation and agility has allowed us to thrive amid challenges. Despite the macroeconomic environment's volatility (pandemic, recession, bank failures) and a crowded contracts market, we remained focused on listening to our customers, innovating, and delivering value. Over time, this commitment has earned us trust within a closely connected community, largely through word of mouth.

I am also passionate about sharing knowledge and experiences to inspire resilience in the legal community and beyond. As a thought leader with a substantial online following, I've used my platform to address challenges faced by women, in-house lawyers, and legal professionals, especially as a function perceived to be purely administrative and tactical.

Furthermore, my advocacy for women, people of color, Asian Americans, and first-generation Americans reflects my commitment to encouraging resilience in underrepresented communities. I have mentored aspiring professionals from diverse backgrounds, offering guidance on overcoming challenges and building confidence, influence, and resilience in their careers ●



Violet Okpere

General Manager CP Projects, Shell

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Location: Nigeria

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I started my professional career with a degree in civil engineering, very excited to start my first job with Bouygues as a site engineer at the young age of 20. I joined Shell Nigeria soon after in the Supply Chain function fulling the keen desire to join the oil and gas industry. I have now worked 30 years in this industry with a career that spans across Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Mozambique), Asia (Brunei), Europe (Aberdeen, Netherlands, London), managing regional and global teams and portfolios. My roles have remained primarily in Supply Chain Management covering all facets, leading and managing people, across cultural and business boundaries. I am now a General Manager responsible for contracting and procurement of all Shell Group major projects in Europe, Middle East and Africa with a portfolio value of over \$40 billion CapEx.

I look back on my career to date and am proud of the achievements and recognition of driving commercial delivery and transformational change which centres on people and teams, with excellence in execution and business delivering, managing collaborative relationships across companies, suppliers, joint ventures, and government.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Making a positive difference

During my 30 years as a contracting and procurement professional, there are two key differences I have personally made while working across processes, systems, and people.

As the Discipline Excellence Head in Shell, I developed a new approach to the Contracting and Category management process, moving away from hundreds of step-by-step work instructions to a process that allows the staff to apply professional judgment focusing on clearly articulated objectives and intended outcomes.

This simplified and delivery-focused process set a transformative foundation for the function as professionals, moving us away from administrative tasks to value delivery and intent-based activities. The team I led in delivering this new approach was recognised with a director's award.

In a similar light I also feel proud of the transformative change I made to the supply chain function in Sasol Petroleum International when I worked there for four years as the Global Supply Chain manager, earning recognition with a Golden Broom award. The supply chain function transformed from being a process bottle-neck and value-eroding function to being a value-enabling process and strategic business partner. I led this by personally inspiring the team and individuals to a changed mindset of professionalism and business delivery. I focused on building on everyone's strength whilst mapping development plans for continuous improvement and creating a key performance dashboard managed with pride.

Inspiring and influencing others

Developing people has been a constant thread of my leadership journey. I have mentored several people over the years. In my current role I instituted and have sponsored a staff development and career planning framework recognised as best practice and which is being replicated by other functions. The framework ensures that each staff member is discussed in depth during the year to ensure that their strengths and desires are navigated appropriately to provide the opportunity to achieve their potential and apply their strengths to deliver great results. The theme that I drive is 'everyone has excellence which we need to focus to a fit of career and job roles'. This has worked well and in the last five years I have seen and developed several people as outstanding professionals in the organisation.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Long term resilience requires recognising the changes in society, business, supply chains and governmental environment. Recognising the change in environment also requires recognising the need to adapt the organisation to these changes in terms of our processes, management systems, ways of working, mindsets, and behaviours – in a timely manner for competitive edge. As such I have pioneered and led the development of a new training and development program centred on the aspects I mentioned above on the adaptive changes required for the future of contracting and procurement in our organisation. This program was piloted in 2023 successfully and will now be rolled out to the wider organisation ●

"Everyone has excellence which we need to focus to a fit of career and job roles"



Jody Rowe

Chief Executive Officer of Rowe Advisory, Podcaster of Tough Talk with Jody Rowe

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Location: Australia

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Fortunately, I was brought up in a commercial environment in South Australia and my family were the founders of T&R Pastoral, now Thomas Foods, a global organisation. This provided me a good start to the world of business.

As an accounting graduate, my career spanned the agriculture, mining, oil and gas, renewables and industrial industries. Throughout my corporate years, I held roles primarily focused on commercial contracts and procurement at several multinationals, including Barrick Gold and Rio Tinto, where I was involved in large-scale mining projects and operations. My career later transitioned to the oil and gas industry.

Over the years in corporate I gained a good strategic view of the market, understanding its needs and could recognise potential opportunities for growth and continuous improvements. However, after 30 years working in a corporate environment, I followed my desire to conduct consulting, private equity and board roles, which have always been of particular interest to me.

I particularly enjoy advisory board roles due to the lower risk and genuine respect for contributions. In 2013, I founded Rowe Advisory. Over the years Rowe Advisory has developed into a Contracts and Procurement / Supply Chain company resourced with industry-experienced talent. Rowe Advisory has tier one clients in Australia across multiple industries. In 2019 I established Rowe Advisory in the UK, and we have been measured in our approach working with oil and gas and renewable organisations. Our team has grown over the years and in addition to our core scope we work with many organisations on various other scopes including human resources.

In 2020 during COVID, I founded Promitheia Procurement an online shopping platform for all templates required for a Contracts and Procurement function. An innovative short cut to take the hard work away from drafting bespoke documents.

In 2023 I founded the Tough Talk with Jody Rowe Podcast. Tough Talk is all about Energy transition where I draw on my extensive network to engage with the right guest. Subjects include Hydrogen, Gas, Coal, Transmission, Onshore and Offshore wind, Solar, across industries including Agriculture. Tough Talk is tracking well since establishment.

Over the last 10 years I think I have proven that Contracts and Procurement professionals can effectively have a business, have board roles and become media personalities... Funny but kind of true!

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Inspiring and influencing others

It's easy to stay in corporate life and believe there is no risk, but there is. For me to demonstrate to others it is very possible to back yourself as having the experience to be valuable and the confidence to take a far more commercial approach. Rowe Advisory Australia and UK, Board roles, Promitheia Procurement, Tough Talk with Jody Rowe and a few private equity plays – who would have thought.

Raising the reputation of contracting

At times, my frustrations with the corporate world – such as limited seats at the table, transactional business rather than strategic, lack of new graduates, and late engagement etc. – reinforced my belief in the value of Rowe Advisory. Our company rewards talent and actively promotes the benefits of engaging Contracts and Procurement services. I believe our reputation for skilled, industry-experienced personnel who deliver results for clients showcases the importance of these functions, as reflected in our case studies. In a world where the market is tight on resources, Rowe Advisory focuses on good clients and consultants, ensuring no talent is wasted.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Over the last 10 years resilience was key, COVID and commodity pricing changes, lack of resources, client demands on time and terms and many other factors shows a clear demonstration. In 2020 contracts were terminated and ceased, so thankfully the team responded well and we transitioned into other work to survive.

Diversity plays an important role here also; I have never felt unsupported as a female, but it has been said to me my business would be bigger if I were a male. I am officially deaf to these conversations as they tend to encourage negativity and are a major distraction to getting and maintaining a successful business. Regardless, in the Energy sector it is what it is, you are a minority especially as a female-owned business, however nothing stops me from moving forward into anything I want. Running a small business means being agile, nurturing your network and just keeping going because stopping is not an option ●

“Be agile, nurture your network and just keep going because stopping is not an option”



Dora Ruiz Madrigal

Head of Collaborative Purchasing, ChileCompra
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Location: Chile

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Since 2003, Dora Ruiz has been part of the Directorate of Public Procurement (ChileCompra), where she has spearheaded public procurement risk models, integrity systems, and large-scale purchasing initiatives. Her focus has been optimizing State spending through aggregated procurement, notably within the Health and Central Government sectors, driving significant savings and efficiency. Dora has also promoted transparency in public procurement by establishing the ChileCompra Observatory, which detects irregularities and promotes best practices within State agencies. She is known for building long-term, trust-based relationships with suppliers and stakeholders and has extensive experience managing multicultural teams.

In 2015, Dora became Head of the Collaborative Purchasing Division, where she designed and implemented a new purchasing model focused on standardization and efficiency. By 2022, her team had made available 19 Framework Agreements on www.mercadopublico.cl, generating USD \$849 million in sales and saving 27% over market prices.

She also led the development of the Framework Agreement store, the first in Latin America to use Magento, offering a seamless e-commerce experience for State purchases.

Dora has pioneered coordinated purchasing, bringing together multiple entities to reduce costs. In 2022, she oversaw health, technology, and telephony purchases that saved USD \$35 million (36% below projected costs). Her aggregation of electricity demand for 144 hospitals since 2016 has saved the State an additional USD \$6 million.

Between 2014 and 2018, Dora developed the ChileCompra Observatory using Big Data to detect procurement irregularities, such as discriminatory clauses or fragmented purchases. She also formed alliances with key national oversight bodies to strengthen anti-corruption efforts. By 2023, the Observatory gained legal status, further enhancing its power to address complaints about irregular procurement.

From 2010 to 2015, Dora led ChileCompra's Clients Department, advising over 850 public agencies on procurement strategies, developing training models, and implementing the Management Improvement Program (PMG). This initiative integrated 200 central government agencies into a continuous improvement system.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Innovation and entrepreneurship

In 2014, Dora led the creation of ChileCompra's Procurement Observatory, which implemented a red-flag monitoring system using Big Data to improve State procurement processes. This innovation addressed irregularities such as subjective evaluation criteria and procurement fragmentation, allowing for more transparent purchasing across 850 State agencies. In recognition, ChileCompra won the 'Innovation in Government Procurement' award from the Organization of American States (OAS) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Dora also spearheaded the implementation of coordinated purchasing, which has resulted in significant cost savings for the State. Notably, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, she ensured product stock for the health sector while generating substantial savings in personal protective equipment and parenteral food purchases (18% and 33% savings, respectively).

Leadership

Dora has been a key figure in public procurement both nationally and internationally. She contributed to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s 2017 study on efficient and inclusive framework agreements in Chile and participates actively in regional discussions on transparency and efficiency in public procurement. Her efforts to promote women's leadership in the State of Chile led to her inclusion in the Civil Service Directorate's Women to Lead campaign.

In academia, Dora teaches in Adolfo Ibañez University's Diploma in Public Procurement program, sharing her expertise in collaborative purchasing and public procurement regulations. She co-authored a paper

on prioritizing local suppliers in public procurement, published in Spain's *Revista General de Derecho Administrativo*. Dora has also served as Deputy Director of ChileCompra in two separate terms (2018–2019 and 2022–2023).

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Resilience is a core leadership quality, and Dora has consistently demonstrated the ability to anticipate future challenges and align her teams with new goals. Since the Procurement Law's enactment in 2004, she has played a pivotal role in implementing new procurement models and legislation. Her leadership was especially critical with the law's modernization in 2023, driving policy changes and training more than 5,000 public officials.

Dora is also a mentor in the Civil Service's Senior Public Managers leadership program, where she offers guidance to improve public-sector leadership. Her mentorship helps create resilient leaders capable of navigating complex procurement challenges and fostering long-term improvements across Chile's public institutions ●

"Dora consistently demonstrates the ability to anticipate future challenges and align her teams with new goals"



Adriana Salazar Cota

Senior Procurement Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank

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Location: USA

Q: Describe your professional background and story

From an early age, I aspired to make a positive societal impact on a large scale. Living in a small town in northern Mexico this seemed like an ambitious goal, but with discipline and determination, I was able to win an Excellence Scholarship to one of the most prestigious universities in the country and begin my journey studying economics. Studying at the Technological Institute of Monterrey opened a world of opportunities, giving me access to high-quality technical knowledge and the opportunity to further my education at prestigious universities in the USA and Sweden.

I began my professional journey in the public sector at 24, securing a position as Deputy Director of Public-Private Partnerships for Energy Infrastructure at the Ministry of Finance. I was the youngest and only woman in a senior role, navigating a male-dominated environment by leveraging my technical skills and knowledge. My career in public procurement began when Mexico undertook a significant reform of its procurement regulations. As Director of Economic Research for the newly formed Public Procurement Unit, I led the implementation of reverse auctions,

framework agreements, and consolidated purchasing strategies. Overseeing 37 procurement strategies across 256 agencies, I generated \$300 million in savings and identified \$1.5 billion in overall impact through efficiency gains and market improvements.

Seeking to further develop my expertise, I went back to school and earned a Masters in Public Administration from the London School of Economics through scholarships. With this new perspective, I joined the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), where I work to modernize public procurement systems across Latin America and the Caribbean. Public procurement has been the perfect platform to help create the social value I always dreamed of.

“Public procurement has been the perfect platform to help create the social value I always dreamed of”

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Social value

At the IDB, I lead the implementation of Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP), promoting sustainability criteria in both national procurement systems and bank-financed projects. My strategy includes assessing SPP progress, capacity-building, fostering collaboration, and developing practical tools. Achievements include:

- Building partnerships with organizations like the Inter-American Network on Government Procurement (INGP) and the International Development Research Center. We developed a series of diagnostics, feasibility studies, and tools for the region and in 2023, we developed a joint statement with 14 multilateral development banks on mainstreaming SPP.
- Developing practical tools like a model directive and a supplier self-assessment tool and guidelines for the inclusion of sustainability criteria in bank-financed procurement.
- Training over 600 IDB staff and executing agency officials on SPP through tailored courses.
- Offering expert advice on integrating SPP into procurement regulations in countries like Peru, Honduras, and Argentina, and advising more than 20 IDB-financed projects.

Through these efforts, SPP has contributed to minimizing environmental impacts while enhancing social outcomes, advancing sustainable growth in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Raising the reputation of contracting

For nearly a decade, I worked on the IDB's Country System Strengthening Strategy (UCS), helping Latin American and Caribbean governments modernize their procurement systems and align with international best practices. I supported 20+ country diagnostics

using procurement systems assessment methodology and led over 500 strengthening activities centred on e-government, transparency, gender inclusion, and innovation. Strategic alliances with organizations like the INGP enabled the sharing of experiences, tools, and training among countries, leading to enhanced regional cooperation. Over the last decade, Latin American countries have increased supplier participation, improved access to procurement opportunities, and implemented e-procurement systems. They've also adopted open data standards, embraced disruptive technologies, and involved civil society in efforts to improve accountability and transparency.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

To ensure long-term resilience, I'm working to improve the skills and knowledge of our procurement team. I have developed a comprehensive professionalization model based on the experience of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in designing and implementing professionalization initiatives in countries around the world. This is the first time that such lessons have been adapted for implementation at the organizational level. We are pleased to be the first multilateral development bank to adopt this approach and to partner with the OECD to take it forward. The model includes assessing workforce skills to identify gaps, setting competency standards, and implementing a framework for certification, capacity-building, and incentivization. Other multilateral development banks have shown interest in joining our initiative, and over the coming year, we plan to collaborate with them to expand the model's impact. By investing in our staff's professional growth, we aim to transform ourselves and, ultimately, support the broader transformation of Latin America and the Caribbean into a more equitable and sustainable region ●



Deborah-Anne Strydom

Global Senior Expert in Contract and Commercial Management, Huawei

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Location: China

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I have had a varied career, starting in advertising focusing on production, logistics, and relations. This was my introduction to contracts, a theme that would become central in my career. I transitioned to event management, working with corporate customers and state-owned enterprises, before joining a South African mobile content start-up. I began as the interface between customers and vendors, negotiating contracts and building key relationships. Eventually, I was headhunted by one of the world's largest telecommunications vendors to serve as Regional Partner Manager. It was here that I met my first mentor, who sparked my passion for contracts and inspired me to explore how contracts are integral to an organization's success.

In 2011 I joined Huawei as Senior Contract Manager for Eastern and Southern Africa. I spent seven years in this role, rising to Regional Director for Contract, Commercial, and Fulfilment Management, reporting directly to the Regional President. I was the first and

only woman to hold this role. At the time of my departure to our headquarters in China, I led a team of nearly 90 staff, servicing 25 countries. Today, I am a Global Senior Expert in Contract and Commercial Management.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Leadership

"We need to accept that we don't always make the right decisions, that we'll screw up royally sometimes. Understand that failure is not the opposite of success, it's part of success." Arianna Huffington (Founder and CEO, Thrive Global)

I have always believed that leadership is shown not by your own achievements, but the achievements you are able to inspire and cultivate in others. At Huawei, I have achieved several leadership positions, from being a Regional Manager to the first female Regional Director for my department. This, however, would not have been possible without the support and input from my staff, peers, and management. During my time in Eastern and Southern Africa I made sure to drive and embrace the company strategy of localisation, where I was able to convert the composition of my department to being almost 75% local staff.

I was also the chairperson of Management Committee (MANCO) for the South Africa office, to ensure that employees rights, involvement, and concerns were addressed. In my current role, I actively coach and mentor Contract and Commercial Managers (CCMs) globally, guiding them in their efforts to advance in their careers, helping them to grow into future leaders.

Raising the reputation of contracting

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." African proverb

CCMs are only effective when they can act as the 'universal translator' within an organization, having the ability to translate the role requirements to the rest of the team. When I first joined Huawei, I achieved this by bootstrapping myself into the technical side of projects, to gain traction with the delivery team, and by being able to decode what was required contractually. As time has passed, my role and my ability have evolved and grown so that I am able to engage across functions and departments. I lead enablement and training for all CCMs, which also exposes me to the sales and solutions organizations internally. Through this exposure, I am able to help sales and solutions colleagues better understand and engage in negotiations, contractually-speaking: this is key to the overall success of the organisation. Although I have a global role now, it does not hinder my direct involvement in customer contracts, negotiations or on-site support. Through the trust I have garnered over the years I am often asked to advise and assist on many different matters.

"Leadership is shown not by your own achievements, but the achievements you are able to inspire and cultivate in others"

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

"Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to." Richard Branson

I am always inspired by this Branson quote and believe long-term resilience within an organization starts with how you inspire staff to learn and engage. Bearing this in mind, I have taken on the role of point of contact for global enablement and training point of contact for CCMs within the largest business group in my organization. This means I am key in ensuring information parity, as my organization is officially bilingual. Providing equal access to knowledge allows staff to take ownership of their responsibilities, fostering confidence and inclusion. This is the foundation of resilience within my team. I strive to ensure that our employees feel empowered to speak with authority on key topics, which helps strengthen the organization. I also remain curious and committed to lifelong learning, which I see as essential to resilience. This curiosity allows me to adapt and refocus, ensuring that I remain current in my field and in adjacent domains ●



Elizabeth Vazquez

Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of WEConnect International

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Location: USA

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I was born in Mexico and raised in America by my single mom whose struggles inspired me to better understand the nature of power and inequality. My studies led me to a focus on global value chains because it was the easiest way to understand how power flows by following the money. My passion was, and continues to be, a focus on moving as much money into the hands of women as fast as possible because of the sustainable and inclusive way most women spend their revenue on their families and communities. After college I helped to lead a global non-profit focused on the role of women as business owners, solution providers and job creators. When I would ask the women business owners what they needed most, they consistently said customers regardless of their country, industry or size of business. At the time, the world was focused on access to finance for women, but the women I was meeting said their focus was on revenue.

The Women’s Business Enterprise National Council is an American non-profit with a global committee of member buyers that want to find women suppliers in all the major countries where they source products and services, but 15 years ago they lacked a global database of verified women-owned business suppliers. As a result, we piloted and then incorporate a new and independent global non-profit to focus on finding, registering, educating and certifying women-owned businesses based outside of the United States called WEConnect International. Today, the WEConnect International team is serving women-owned businesses based in over 135 countries, supporting member buyers with over \$4 trillion in annual purchasing power, moving billions of dollars into the hands of women each year, and as the CEO I get to live my dream serving the communities I love and respect.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

My career focus has always been on inspiring and influencing others to take actions that will make a positive difference in the world. My work on diversity and inclusion is based on a fundamental reality – we all want and need access to the best solutions the world has to offer – and that demand requires all entrepreneurs have equal access to the relevant resources, knowledge and networks needed for game-changing innovations and business success. While women represent half the global population, they are literally invisible as suppliers of products and services in our global value chains. As the CEO of WEConnect International, I know that our team and the communities we serve are changing that reality to the benefit of all because we continue to lead this growing movement for inclusive global value chains by educating markets, connecting supply with demand, and tracking, measuring and reporting on our collective impact year over year. Yes, this work is hard and complicated and hugely underfunded given the size, scope and urgency of this massive market failure, but it is worthy of my time and talents because we simply cannot afford to wait another 300 years for gender equality and our global ecosystem cannot support our current ways of doing business. Key to all of this is staying focused and collaborating with leaders in this space such as Sally Guyer and World Commerce & Contracting.

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Yes, everything I do strikes a balance between focusing on the art of the possible and managing risks by working with other experts on how to build the long-term resiliency of WEConnect International and the organizations we serve – women-owned businesses, member buyers and our partners. We provide year-round training in almost every region of the world on how to build more resilient businesses and global value chains by making them more inclusive and sustainable. Every day I try to make new connections between people and between businesses that are willing to share their knowledge and networks with each other because of what is in it for them and for the communities we all serve. COVID made it clear that the community we have built made it easier for our member buyers to find the local content they desperately needed around the world, and the women suppliers had access to the resources they needed to build the short-term and long-term resiliency required to thrive in this brave new world ●

“I get to live my dream serving the communities I love and respect”



Emma Willingham

Commercial Director, Governance Babcock International Group

Location: UK

Q: Describe your professional background and story

I joined Babcock in 2003 as a secretary supporting a bid team, primarily because I needed a job after university. Little did I know that this would set the stage for a 20-year career in Commercial. Through observing the dedication and collaboration within the bid team, I quickly recognized the impact of Commercial expertise and decided to pursue this path.

Over the years, I've progressed from a secretary to my current role as Commercial Director (Governance) for Babcock Group. My journey has spanned a wide range of roles, from Commercial Graduate to Commercial Officer, Contract Manager, and eventually, Head of Commercial.

In my current role, I report to the Babcock Group Commercial Director, and my focus is on achieving excellence within our Commercial function. I'm also Babcock's lead for the Strategic Partnering Programme Commercial Workstream with the UK Ministry of Defence, where I promote best practices in commercial relationships between our organizations.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Inspiring and influencing others

Throughout my 20 years in Commercial, I've witnessed a significant transformation in gender diversity within senior business roles. Early in my career, a male in a senior position remarked to me that "the only women who would ever be in the Directors' suite would be those making the coffee", which was typical of the atmosphere in a lot of businesses back then – very male, pale and stale and yes, I was making the coffee! Today, I'm proud to be one of the women that has broken the glass ceiling and worked my way up from a secretarial position to a Commercial Director at a company like Babcock.

During that time, I've had two children and have learnt how to juggle being a working parent and have a successful career. That often means unusual late-working patterns to meet work commitments whilst carving out time for nativity and sports day! I'm no longer in the minority and many of us are doing the same thing and I'm proud to have contributed to that shift in mindset and representation.

Making a positive difference

I have often been called upon as a 'troubleshooter' to fix challenging situations. One instance involved leading a recruitment campaign for a commercial team that was operating at 30% below capacity, with staff nearing burnout. The loss of key team members had created a downward spiral, and the team needed urgent support to fill vacancies with the right candidates. Over 12 months, I dedicated time to sifting, interviewing, and onboarding resources, eventually raising the team's numbers to over 95%. This required careful recruitment – finding not just technically capable individuals, but those with the right attitude and fit for the team. Through this process, I learned the value of investing time in recruitment and how flexible working patterns can help ease the nerves of candidates.

I've always sought to actively promote and role model managing a successful career alongside a demanding home life. That doesn't mean it is easy and I think any working parent sometimes get the balance tipped the wrong way, but more often than not, flexibility is beneficial both for the business and the individual.

"I've always sought to actively promote and role model managing a successful career alongside a demanding home life"

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

My resilience was tested in 2020 when I led the commercial effort for a multi-billion £ tender under extreme time pressure. The tender response was due in three months, and despite knowing the timeline was impossible, my team and I pushed ourselves to the limit, often working 90-hour weeks. I justified this by telling myself it was for my family, but after months of intense effort, I realized the cost to my well-being and family life was too high. This experience changed how I approach resilience, both personally and within my teams.

Since that time, I've implemented three key principles to foster resilience:

- 1. Ruthless prioritization:** The workload in Commercial can be overwhelming, so I prioritize relentlessly, ensuring my focus aligns with the business's most urgent needs. This may disappoint some, but I've learned that accepting delayed responses or alternative solutions is part of managing expectations.
- 2. Be realistic:** While I enjoy helping others, I've learned to set realistic goals. This often involves having difficult conversations when expectations exceed our capacity. I now provide alternative solutions, enabling informed decisions rather than simply saying "no".
- 3. Look out for colleagues:** It's often the most diligent individuals who are overburdened. I make it a point to check in on colleagues I believe are under stress and offer support where possible, knowing that a strong team is built on shared responsibility and care ●



LeNaye Willis-Lloyd

Senior Vice President, Contracts QinetiQ Inc
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Location: USA

Q: Describe your professional background and story

Twenty-five years ago, after completing my graduate studies in history, I found myself at a crossroads, uncertain about pursuing a career as a professor. Fortunately, a merciful mentor offered me summer employment at a small international consultancy. This turned into a three-year role where I received my first exposure to procurement for large scale humanitarian assistance projects in Haiti, Bosnia, and Afghanistan and received a foundation in government contracting.

A key client then offered me a role at a larger consultancy, where I negotiated contracts with challenging subcontractors on a critical project. This sparked my interest in contract negotiations, and I realized that while I loved the work, I had much to learn about the laws and regulations governing government contracts. I naively joined a contracts department for what I thought would be two years to learn 'everything'. Over two decades later, I'm still learning.

I started my formal contracting career at a management consulting firm. I ended up holding eight different roles of increasing responsibility in both contracts and subcontracts which allowed me to develop a comprehensive background. Moreover, I found my most important mentor, who was deeply knowledgeable in government contracts and poured into me, encouraging my curiosity and career ambitions. It was these ambitions along with a hunger to start a new professional chapter that led me to pursue an executive role.

Today, I have had the privilege of leading contracts and subcontracts management functions at mission-driven companies, where I've been able to assemble talented teams, mentor others, and apply contracts expertise to achieve business goals and drive enterprise value.

Q: Tell us about two personal achievements and contributions through your career

Leadership

One of my proudest accomplishments was successfully lobbying our then-CEO to introduce a new backup child and elder care human resources benefit for all employees. This experience taught me the invaluable

leadership lesson of listening. Along with a co-worker who was also a mother of young children, I embarked on a listening tour with employees and stakeholders. As we learned about the need for elder care support, we expanded our focus to encompass this critical need, thereby serving a broader range of employees. The more we genuinely listened, the more we learned, and the more complete our plan became, and the more internal support we garnered. To this day, I realize that listening is the truest learning channel.

Supporting diversity and inclusion

In 2020, I stepped into a newly established role as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Executive Lead where I managed the entirety of Avantis Federal's Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), enhancing the overall employee experience. By creating a monthly council, I improved ERG collaboration and communication, leading to more robust programming and advancement of the company's philanthropic efforts. I launched a 12-week DEI Strategy Assessment, which included focus groups, employee surveys, and a cross functional strategy session which led to an updated multi-year strategy and actionable tactics for the organization. I also prioritized a robust communication strategy. I drove updated recruiting materials to explicitly address DEI for prospective employees. I led the effort for a quarterly DEI newsletter for all employees and a DEI email inbox for targeted communications and feedback. My leadership was recognized by the Washington Business Journal where I was named a 2022 Diversity in Business Award Honoree for my work.

"Listening is the truest learning channel"

Q: How have you encouraged long-term resilience within your organization or beyond?

Long-term resilience is critical in building and maintaining an organization. Moreover, it's equally important to build a meaningful career that centers on the ability to weather setbacks, rise to challenges and take advantage of opportunities. Resilience is a muscle which requires constant development, and I encourage long-term resilience within my organization in a few notable ways:

- First, I select team members with a strong sense of purpose regarding their work and life. Assembling a talented team of professionals is foundational to any high performing organization so I look beyond technical capabilities to skills that correlate with resilience, patience, and collaboration. The most buoyant individuals have a clear direction, know what is important to them and have a corresponding set of guiding principles that anchor them during difficult periods.
- Second, I encourage my team to problem solve not only using their professional abilities, but their emotional flexibility and agility both of which are equally important components of resilience. Developing emotional agility assists people to navigate stress in a sustainable way while achieving better performance and well-being.
- Finally, I foster a growth mindset across my entire team, encouraging them to embrace infinite opportunities to improve through hard work, persistence, and learning. Ultimately, I strive to model supportive behavior which is beneficial to team development and facilitates an organization better able to handle stress where resiliency and emotional flexibility are emphasized and rewarded ●

The articles that follow are short summaries of webinars we hosted over the last year, each illustrating the passion and commitment of just a few of the Inspiring Women changing our world today 🌟

Voices of change

Watch
the webinar



Webinar: Voices of change for International Women's Day

Panel speakers: Simone Robinson, Paula Folkes-Dallaire, CJ Lloyd Webley and Sally Guyer

Article author: Anna-Marie Vickers

Since its inception in March 1911, International Women's Day (IWD) has served as a rallying point for all of those committed to the advancement of gender equality worldwide.

At WorldCC Foundation, we understand that true progress is only possible when we elevate not just the voices of women but the full spectrum of diverse identities that enrich our society. IWD is not just about women; it's about celebrating the diverse tapestry of experiences, backgrounds, and identities that collectively strengthen our global community.

At its core, IWD calls upon us to recognize that our differences – whether cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or ideological – should unite us in our shared humanity. This article, a short summary of one of our first webinars in 2024, explores how investing in women, embracing diversity, and fostering harmony can enhance advocacy, build stronger communities, and ultimately create a better world for everyone.

The importance of intersectionality

At the heart of advancing diversity and inclusion is an understanding of intersectionality – the recognition that identity is multi-faceted and cannot be reduced to a

single category. As Simone Robinson pointed out, “I am never just a woman. You can't separate my being a woman and my race apart.” Intersectionality matters because it provides a fuller picture of how different forms of inequality intersect. When we analyze data, for example, it's not enough to look at gender alone. We must “layer conversations around ethnicity, age, disability, and neurodiversity”, creating a more nuanced understanding of the unique challenges faced by various groups. By acknowledging these multiple identities, organizations can create more informed, empathetic approaches to inclusivity and foster conversations that reflect this interconnectedness.

The power of allyship

As we examine pathways to empowerment and equality, it becomes clear that true allyship is essential to this process; “We are all better together”, Paula Folkes-Dallaire, one of our speakers, emphasized. At the heart of allyship lies the ability for one to recognize their privilege and power and use it to uplift marginalized communities.

But what actually makes allyship effective? True allies must avoid performative actions, like simply hiring from diverse backgrounds or tokenistic support. Instead, they should engage deeply with the challenges these

communities face. Allies should educate themselves, demonstrating empathy and self-awareness, and avoid placing the burden of education on marginalized individuals. Paula added a powerful reminder that true allyship is about proximity: “If you're not feeling some of that trauma... you're not standing close enough.” It should feel a little uncomfortable! Truly understanding the lived experiences of those facing inequality, rather than adopting a passive stance, is where the power of change often lies. Marginalized communities already have their own strength and resilience so, as CJ Lloyd Webley noted, “When you pair [our] power of being in our lived experience with the access that allies have, we are all going to be more powerful.” It's this collaboration that drives true transformation. Paula's observation, “We have the power to create magic”, reinforces the notion that when we work together – uniting lived experience with ally access and privilege – we unlock transformative potential at a structural level.

Taking action: Beyond awareness

Creating inclusive environments is an ongoing journey. CJ affirmed that everyone has the potential to be an ally, and whether through mentorship or sponsorship, each individual can contribute meaningfully to creating more equitable spaces.

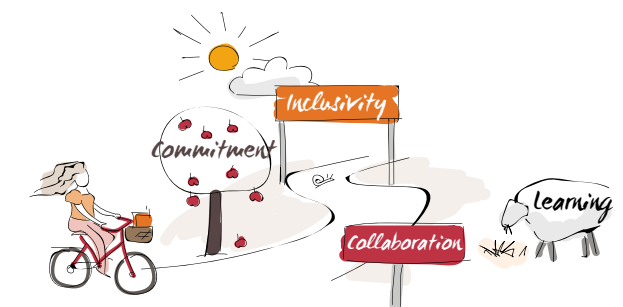
Paula also pointed out the long-term nature of this work, stating, “You can't fix racism because it's a structure. These are systemic issues that need to be addressed from the top down.” The fight for equity requires patience, persistence, and a commitment to making incremental changes that lead to sustainable progress.

So what does action look like? It's about consciously making the effort to understand intersecting levels of identity and inequality, amplifying underrepresented voices in decision-making processes, forming true bonds of allyship through education to support marginalized individuals, and generally creating a culture that fosters inclusion at every level.

The real power lies in genuine collaboration and the collective commitment to understanding each other's experiences, which can lead to extraordinary change.

Ultimately, the journey toward fostering inclusivity is one of commitment, collaboration, and continuous learning. “Let's not stop here”, Simone encouraged, urging everyone to keep these conversations alive and ongoing. The path forward requires all of us – regardless of background or identity – to engage actively in this mission. As CJ reminded us, “It's about making steps toward a brighter future”. By sharing personal stories, calling out prejudice, and dismantling systemic barriers, we can each play a role in fostering a more inclusive and equitable world.

Empowering all voices is about more than just listening; it's about amplifying, advocating, and acting. When we commit to raising up those who have historically gone unheard, we drive progress, and we foster a world where every voice has the power to create change. By embracing the diversity of voices around us, we lay the foundation for a more just, equitable, and empowered future for everyone ●



Let's not stop here. The journey toward fostering inclusivity is one of commitment, collaboration, and continuous learning.

Social mobility in action

Watch the webinar



Webinar: Empowering social mobility – Diversity, equity, and inclusion in action

Panel speakers: Melinda Johnson, Natalia Ombach and Nikki Mackay

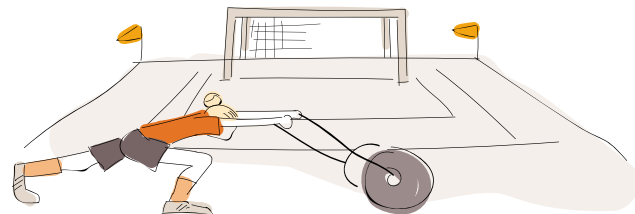
Article author: Anna-Marie Vickers

At the intersection of social mobility, diversity, equity, and inclusion lies a unique blend of hope and action – an area where commitment to change has tangible power. Social mobility is more than a policy; it's a pathway that allows individuals to rise, regardless of their starting point, and demands a collective responsibility to provide fair access to growth. Melinda Johnson, COO at OFGEM UK, emphasizes that promoting social mobility extends beyond simple resource allocation or ticking boxes. It requires reshaping structures that often hold people back, actively constructing opportunities that can have lasting impact, and recognizing the potential of those who would otherwise be sidelined.

A driving force behind this change is the mindset through which we approach it. Natalia Ombach, a leadership coach and executive, champions what she terms the growth mindset – a perspective that every individual, regardless of background, can learn, evolve, and thrive. For her, the concept isn't just about self-

improvement but a key ingredient in challenging and dismantling societal barriers. "Growth mindset isn't a one-way street", she insists, "it's about mutual empowerment". Her commitment shines through as she talks about how she learns from those she mentors, particularly the surprising perspectives younger voices bring to the table. By being open to new ideas and seeing challenges as growth opportunities, Natalia believes we can forge not only individual paths to success but also create more inclusive, resilient communities.

Melinda builds on this concept of inclusion, pointing out that social mobility isn't about making things 'easier' but about fostering a level playing field. True inclusion, she notes, should feel as natural as any other social fabric in our lives.



Social mobility isn't about making things easier, but about fostering a level playing field.

In Melinda's view, this responsibility extends to leaders and organizations who must remain adaptable, actively inviting feedback and holding themselves accountable to meaningful diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commitments. Inclusion, she stresses, isn't a temporary initiative to address the issues of today but a fundamental value that has the power to reshape the future.

Bringing DEI into action involves bridging the gap between the theoretical and the practical, a process Natalia refers to as 'continuous learning' for everyone involved. From mentorship to actionable feedback loops, the steps toward greater social mobility demand a blend of empathy and strategy. It's not about providing all the answers but empowering others to find their own, using personal strengths and insights to navigate unique challenges. "Sometimes", Natalia notes with a smile, "it's the journey itself that teaches us what we need to know".

In discussing the impact of growth mindset on social mobility, Natalia brings up the importance of staying present with each person's story, strengths, and potential. Adaptability, for her, is about seeing possibilities in every situation and resisting the urge to follow a one-size-fits-all approach. Every individual brings something valuable to the table, and by celebrating these unique contributions, we're investing in a more dynamic, inclusive environment.

Melinda adds that achieving equity goes hand in hand with addressing issues like bias and access. When asked about the obstacles often faced in creating inclusive workplaces, she emphasizes the importance of organizations committing to long-term goals rather than quick fixes. It's an area that requires leaders to be actively involved, pushing past comfort zones,

"Inclusion is a fundamental value that has the power to reshape the future"

and consistently working to understand the structural challenges many face. For Melinda, embracing diversity isn't about superficial change; it's about implementing policies and attitudes that can endure and evolve with the times.

The journey toward social mobility isn't without its challenges, but there is joy that comes with progress. "It's about celebrating the small wins along the way." Each success, however modest, has the power to shift perspectives and create positive ripples within the larger community. Every barrier overcome is a testament to the potential within each person, a step toward transforming not just individual lives but the very fabric of society.

Social mobility is an ongoing commitment – one that requires organizations, mentors, and communities to look beyond transactional gestures and embrace true, meaningful change. By fostering environments that prioritize inclusion, growth, and equity, we're building more than just individual success stories; we're creating a culture where each step forward represents a win for all. This approach transforms diversity, equity, and inclusion from aspirational ideals into real, impactful action. It's a journey that may be complex, but in the end, each effort makes room for more individuals to rise, fostering not just professional growth but a resilient, inclusive, and empowered society for all ●

Harnessing change

Watch the webinar



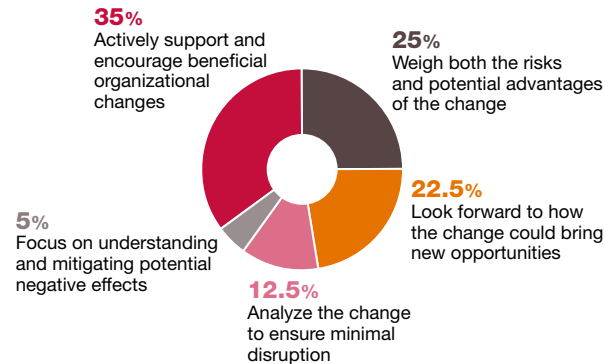
Webinar: Harnessing the power of change – Technology, innovation, and data-driven transformation

Panel speakers: Sally Guyer and Tricia Miller

Article author: Anna-Marie Vickers

In today's rapidly changing world, technology and innovation are at the forefront of driving transformation across industries. From healthcare to finance, businesses are turning to data and automation to solve complex problems, streamline operations, and create better user experiences. But what does it truly take to harness the power of change and achieve meaningful transformation? This article will cover the practical realities, challenges, and opportunities of integrating technology into business practices.

Q: When a significant change is proposed in your organization, how do you respond? (answers from webinar participants)



While technology has the potential to unlock significant benefits, true success lies in understanding its strategic role and effectively managing the human elements of change.

First and foremost we must acknowledge the importance of data in driving transformation. Data is no longer just a byproduct of operations, but the fuel that powers innovation. By leveraging data, businesses can gain insights into trends, user behavior, and operational efficiency that were previously hidden, allowing organizations to make informed decisions that drive continuous improvement. Sectors like finance are using advanced data analytics to predict market trends and personalize client services so, in this context, data becomes a competitive advantage. Businesses that can harness it effectively will be better positioned to adapt to changing market conditions and customer needs.

However, data alone isn't enough. Technology must be aligned with a company's broader strategic goals. Organizations that simply implement technology for the sake of being innovative often find that they are not achieving the desired results. Instead, leaders need to identify specific business challenges or opportunities that technology can solve. Once the purpose is clear, technology becomes an enabler rather than a distraction.

The evolving role of automation

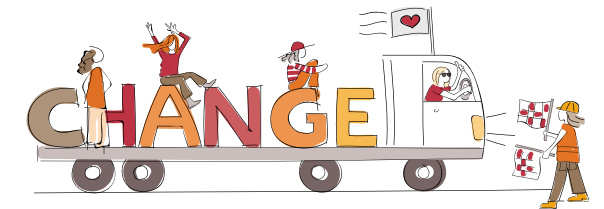
Automation, particularly in sectors like legal and finance, is transforming how work is done. Repetitive tasks that once consumed significant time, such as contract management or financial reporting, are now handled by intelligent systems, freeing up employees to focus on more strategic, creative work. The efficiency gains from automation are undeniable, but the panelists cautioned against viewing it as a magic bullet. Automation can create new risks, such as over-reliance on systems without proper oversight and it must be implemented thoughtfully with a clear understanding of its impact on people.

“People”! That key word! The human aspect of change is a recurring theme throughout broader conversations around technology, data, and artificial intelligence (AI). Why? Technology is only as powerful as the people who use it! Change management, training, and creating a culture of continuous learning are critical to ensuring that employees can embrace new technologies and use them to their full potential. “Leaders need to be honest with their teams about the benefits and challenges of adopting new technologies, and they need to create an environment where people feel comfortable experimenting and even failing”, said Tricia. Hand-in-hand inclusivity in driving technological change is also crucial because when diverse perspectives are brought into the decision-making process, innovation thrives. A variety of voices can spot challenges and opportunities that might otherwise be missed, leading to more robust, inclusive solutions.

One challenge that organizations often face when implementing new technologies is resistance to change. This resistance can stem from fear – whether fear of job displacement, fear of the unknown, or fear of failure. Tricia and Sally discussed how transparency and engagement are key to overcoming this resistance. By clearly communicating why change is necessary, how it will benefit both the organization and its people, and providing ongoing support, leaders can foster a sense of ownership and buy-in across the team.

So, what next? Leaders must not only champion the adoption of new tools but also create a vision that inspires their teams to embrace change. This includes providing the resources needed to succeed, from training and development to ensuring that the right technology infrastructure is in place. As Tricia put it “Change needs to be led from the top, but it also needs to be felt throughout the organization. Everyone has a role to play in making transformation successful.”

Change isn't linear. Even with the best-laid plans, the most capable teams, and a strong culture, progress doesn't always follow a straight line. At times, you'll see forward momentum, only to encounter setbacks or resistance along the way. It's essential to understand that this is part of the journey – both in and outside of work. We must prioritize learning and adaptability. If adaptability is the most desired skill in the modern workforce, then we need to recognize its importance and take active steps to cultivate it. Whether it's embracing AI, generative AI, or simply staying open to new ways of working, leaders need to be ready to contribute to, and even shape, the future. The best thing we can do is be ready for what's next, embrace that change, and play a role in steering it forward. The convergence of technology and human ingenuity is what will ultimately propel businesses forward in an era where the ability to adapt is more critical than ever ●



Be ready for what's next, embrace that change, and play a role in steering it forward.

Unpacking who we are

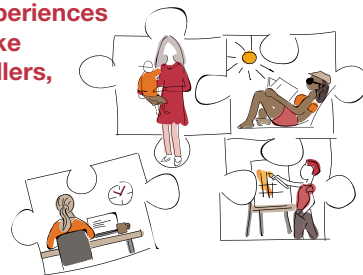
Watch the webinar



Webinar: Identity beyond profession – Unpacking the layers of who we are
Panel speakers: El Mendoza, Emma Willingham, LeNaye Willis-Lloyd and Sally Guyer
Article author: Anna-Marie Vickers

This conversation was a vibrant exploration of what it means to define ourselves outside career labels. From unexpected hobbies to deep personal reflections, the discussion brought together a range of voices, each sharing how their identity unfolds in ways often hidden in professional settings. The panellists reminded us that while work is an important aspect of our lives, it doesn't define the whole of who we are. For many, their strongest sense of identity comes from experiences outside the office – from being parents, travellers, or artists. The conversation was filled with candid reflections, humorous anecdotes, and insights into how they've learned to embrace parts of themselves that might not always make it to their LinkedIn profile.

Professional identity is just one piece of the puzzle. Sense of identity also comes from experiences outside the office, like being parents, travellers, or artists.



Beyond job titles: What truly defines us

Identity is layered, fluid, and deeply personal. El Mendoza shared a particularly striking story about how she had once felt pigeonholed into a professional role that didn't align with her true self. She spoke about the frustration of being defined by a title that didn't reflect her creativity, her passion for community work, or even her love of cooking. Over time, "I learned that my identity is not just tied to my job; it's a tapestry of my experiences, beliefs, and values", she explained.

Emma Willingham, talked about how her journey into parenthood radically shifted her perspective on identity. She explained how becoming a parent brought out qualities in her she hadn't fully recognized before – patience, empathy, and a deeper understanding of what truly matters. "Parenthood changed the way I see myself, and it made me realize that no single role – whether at home or work – can capture the complexity of who I am. We carry multiple identities with us every day. These layers influence how we navigate the world and how we are perceived. It's vital to acknowledge that these intersections shape our experiences."

This theme of complexity – of holding multiple identities at once – was a powerful undercurrent throughout the conversation. LeNaye Willis-Lloyd described it

beautifully as being like a quilt, with patches of different experiences, roles, and passions stitched together. "I am many things at once. And that's okay. In fact, it's beautiful".

Bringing the 'whole self' to work: Myth or reality?

A question that naturally emerged from this exploration of identity was whether it's truly possible to bring your whole self to work. This notion, which has become something of a corporate mantra in recent years, was met with mixed reactions from the panellists.

LeNaye pointed out that while it's aspirational to want to bring every aspect of who we are into the workplace, there are practical limits. "We can't always be the fullest version of ourselves at work. There are professional boundaries, and sometimes, certain parts of who we are might not be relevant or appropriate in the work setting." Instead, it's about balance, finding opportunities to let personal values and passions influence the way we work, without expecting the workplace to accommodate every part of our identity. Emma shared how she navigates this challenge by intentionally blending her personal interests with her professional life. For her, it's about "infusing work with personal values". For example, if sustainability is important to you, you might advocate for greener practices in the office. If creativity is core to who you are, you might look for ways to bring innovation into your projects. "We can't always bring our whole selves, but we can certainly bring more of ourselves than we sometimes allow."

So, how do we create spaces where individuals feel free to express their full identities? El responded with a call for authenticity in professional settings. "We need to foster environments where vulnerability is welcomed. When leaders model authenticity, it encourages everyone else to do the same." Emma reiterated the significance of community in identity formation, "Surrounding ourselves with diverse voices and experiences enriches our understanding of identity.

It reminds us that we're not alone in our journeys and that there's strength in our differences."

LeNaye concluded with an inspiring message about the power of storytelling. "Sharing our stories is a way to reclaim our identities. It's about celebrating our journeys and recognizing the beauty in our diversity."

The role of reflection in understanding identity

The conversation also delved into how self-awareness and reflection play crucial roles in understanding and embracing our identities. El highlighted that, for many, there comes a point in life where you start to ask deeper questions: "Who am I outside of this job? What do I value? What brings me joy?" LeNaye shared a personal experience of leaving a high-profile position that had consumed her life for years. She spoke about how she was forced to confront the question of who she was without the responsibilities that had once defined her every move. "It was like being on a treadmill for years, and suddenly the machine stops." This reflection led her to reconnect with old passions, such as painting and volunteering, that had been sidelined during her career. "It wasn't about reinventing myself, but rediscovering the parts of me that had always been there."

A call to embrace our full identity

The takeaway from this rich and varied discussion was a call to action: embrace all aspects of who you are. It's not about rejecting the importance of professional identity, but about understanding that it's just one piece of a much larger puzzle. As El put it, "We spend so much of our lives working, but at the end of the day, what people remember about us isn't our job title. It's how we made them feel, the impact we had on their lives, and the moments we shared outside the office." We hope that this conversation serves as a reminder to not let work overshadow the other parts of life that bring meaning and joy. It is a call to cultivate those parts, and to let those aspects of our identity shine just as brightly as our professional achievements ●

A tale of two leaders

Watch
the webinar



Webinar: Leading with impact – Empowering women in leadership
Panel speakers: Deborah-Anne Strydom, Ángela Flores and Sally Guyer
Article author: Anna-Marie Vickers

We often hear about the power of leadership, the influence it wields, and the change it can spark. But let's pause for a moment and think about what it truly means to be a leader.

It's not about title. It's not about position. It's about inspiring trust. It's about fostering growth. It's about creating an impact that lasts.

In a recent webinar, we welcomed two extraordinary women who exemplify the art and science of leadership in different and powerful ways: Deborah-Anne Strydom and Ángela Flores. Through their stories of resilience and determination, they revealed what it takes to lead with purpose, humanity, and impact.

Resilience and adaptability

For Deborah-Anne, resilience is more than a skill – it's a mindset. "I always say the last thing anybody should ever say to me is, 'You can't do it', especially if it's followed by, 'because you're a woman'. That's when I'll prove you wrong." Her career journey through the male-dominated telecommunications sector reflects her tenacity. Starting in roles where her capabilities were often underestimated, Deborah-Anne broke barriers to become the first female Vice President in her department globally. Her secret to enduring resilience?

A refusal to wait for permission and a refusal to settle! "If I can't find a way, I'll make a way", she said.

Ángela's reflections on resilience were just as powerful, blending professional adaptability with deeply personal lessons. From navigating political instability where Peru saw seven presidents and 25 Ministers of Health during her tenure in the pharmaceutical sector, to balancing personal crises, she emphasized the importance of perseverance and adaptability. "No question is too small", Ángela shared, encouraging others to embrace vulnerability as a strength. Adaptability extends beyond professional strategies and into an acknowledgment of life's unpredictability and drawing strength from those moments of doubt: "Trust your work, build support systems, and share your fears. Resilience grows when we draw strength from our communities and embrace life's unpredictability."

Impact: Leading by example

Sally brought the conversation back to impact, asking Deborah-Anne how her achievements have paved the way for others. Deborah-Anne reflected, "I lead by example and by being a guiding hand", she explained. Her focus lies in empowering others to find their voices; not to emulate her, but to chart their own paths. "I want the women I work with to feel empowered to see that

leadership isn't about perfection, it's about showing up with heart! The most wonderful female leaders that I've met show their vulnerability, show their humanity, and lead. They don't drag people along; they help people walk with them."

For Ángela, impact is tied to passion and trust. "I want to be remembered as someone who made things happen; passion shines through in your actions, not just your words." Her belief in the power of purpose drives her to act with conviction, ensuring her legacy inspires others to reach for their dreams. "Nobody has the right to tell you that you cannot! That sounds romantic, but you have to have the guts to embrace that romantic notion and make it happen. You have to believe in your aspirations; believe in your work."

Shared goals for the future

As the conversation turned toward the future, both leaders agreed: leadership is a journey, not a destination.

Deborah-Anne reflected on the importance of collaboration by sharing an African proverb which has guided her: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." She also challenged outdated notions of women in leadership: "We must get this notion out of our heads that a strong woman in business needs to be five foot seven, blonde hair, blue eyes, a size six, wearing stiletto heels and tiny little suit. That's not what women leadership in business looks like. Woman leadership is about ensuring there is parity, and bringing care into environments where often people don't really care all that much."

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"

Ángela encouraged women to embrace their potential. "When someone tells you that you can do something, even if it seems difficult, let their belief fuel your determination", she said. "Many children around the world, especially girls, are looking to us as examples. Live with strength and purpose, because women everywhere are waiting for you to rise." Together, we're greater than the sum of our parts.

Closing reflections

Both Deborah-Anne and Ángela reminded us that leadership isn't about being infallible. It's about being human – embracing vulnerability, making mistakes, and growing alongside others. Their stories inspire us to reflect on our own leadership journeys and ask: how can we turn keys for others and pave paths that last? Leadership, after all, is not a solo act. It's a shared endeavour, built on trust, resilience, and the unwavering belief that we can all create a better future together ●



How can we turn keys for others and pave paths that last?

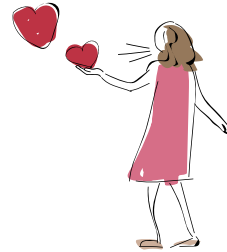
Thank you...

As we conclude this year's Inspiring Women 2024 book, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this program such a success. To our partners, committee members, and the team at WorldCC Foundation – thank you for your unwavering dedication and belief in the power of this initiative. Your hard work and vision continue to shine through every page.

A special thank you to the inspiring women who have courageously shared their stories. Your authenticity, resilience, and achievements not only highlight the strength of our global community but also ignite change in ways that ripple far beyond what we can see.

To everyone reading this book, your support amplifies these voices and helps drive the movement toward equality and empowerment. Together, we celebrate the progress made and reaffirm our commitment to creating a world where all women can thrive.

**With gratitude,
Sally Guyer**



...to the committee

Bernadette Bulacan
Vice President, Lead Global Evangelist,
Icertis

Kathrin Frauscher
Deputy Executive Director, Open
Contracting Partnership

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President and Chief Executive Officer,
WorldCC Foundation and Global
Chief Executive Officer, World Commerce
& Contracting

Sangeeta Khorana
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Claire Robinson
Group Commercial Director, Babcock
International Group

Philippa Smith
Division Manager, BC Hydro

Anna-Marie Vickers
Program Manager, WorldCC Foundation
and Executive Assistant, World Commerce
& Contracting

And finally

I find myself reflecting on an issue that is both deeply sensitive and profoundly important: the ongoing struggle for gender equality in all its forms – the interplay between the evolving discussion around gender recognition and the long-standing, unfinished battle for women’s equality. This is a topic that is both sensitive and complex, one that underscores the need for inclusion while also prompting us to ask critical questions about how we focus our collective energies in the broader fight for equality and equity.

For centuries, women have fought for basic rights – to education, to vote, to own property, and to work without discrimination. Yet even today, the fight remains far from over.

Women-owned businesses, for instance, receive less than 1% of corporate procurement spend, and female entrepreneurs face disproportionate barriers in accessing venture capital. Women continue to earn less than their male counterparts, to be underrepresented in leadership, and to bear the brunt of unpaid caregiving responsibilities. These systemic inequities impact billions of lives globally.

Will a focus on gender recognition – important and necessary as it is – unintentionally shift attention away from these pervasive challenges? Might we risk fragmenting a movement that has, for centuries, sought to address the deeply entrenched inequalities faced by women?

And how can we ensure that progress in one area enhances rather than detracts from the pursuit of equity for all? These are difficult but essential questions. The path to equality is not linear, we must strive to ensure that progress in one area does not come at the expense of another. Equality is not a zero-sum game. It is about lifting everyone up while safeguarding the strides already made.

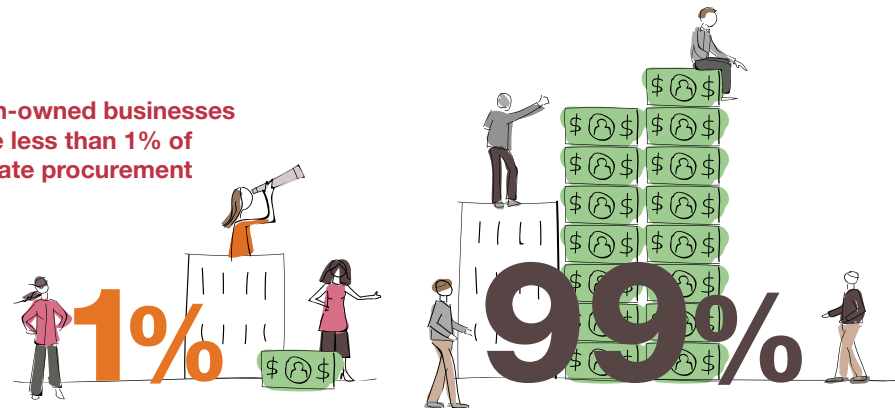
History teaches us that focus, and unity are critical in achieving transformative change. As we navigate this evolving landscape, we must remain vigilant, ensuring that the ongoing struggles for fairness in the workplace, the marketplace, and every corner of society are not eclipsed.

This is not about choosing one cause over another but about building a movement that recognizes the interconnectedness of all struggles for equality. Let us approach this challenge with empathy, humility, and a resolute commitment to ensuring that no one – no woman, no individual – feels their fight has been overlooked or their progress diminished.

**With determination and hope,
Sally Guyer**



Women-owned businesses receive less than 1% of corporate procurement spend.



About WorldCC Foundation

Together we can change the world one contract at a time.

We envisage a world where all trading relationships deliver social and economic benefit.

As such, WorldCC Foundation works to promote and enable an environment where commercial policies and practices are fair and transparent, and contracts are accessible and inclusive for all. We believe better contracts lead to better business and ultimately a better society.

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About WorldCC

World Commerce & Contracting is a not-for-profit association dedicated to helping its global members achieve high-performing and trusted trading relationships. With 75,000 members from over 20,000 across 180 countries worldwide, the association welcomes everyone with an interest in better contracting: business leaders, practitioners, experts and newcomers. It is independent, provocative and disciplined existing for its members, the contracting community and society at large.

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With unmatched technology and category-defining innovation, Icertis pushes the boundaries of what's possible with contract lifecycle management (CLM). The AI-powered, analyst-validated Icertis Contract Intelligence (ICI) platform turns contracts from static documents into strategic advantage by structuring and connecting the critical contract information that defines how an organization runs.

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